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A STUDY OF INTERCESSION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST:

A Course of Meditations for the
Christian Year.

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A
STUDY OF INTERCESSION

BY

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SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS

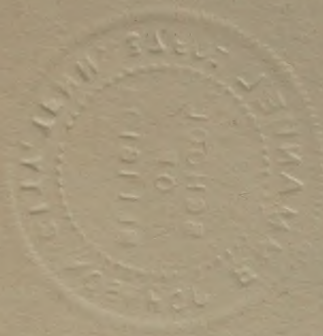
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TO
MY DEAR SONS

WHO
IN THE DAY OF THE NATION'S CALL
HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD,
AND WHO,
WITHOUT LAYING ASIDE THEIR CALL TO THE DIVINE SERVICE,
TRANSFERRED ITS INTERPRETATION
FROM THE QUIET FIELDS OF KELHAM
TO THE CAMPS OF ENGLAND AND THE BATTLEFIELDS OF THE WORLD,
AND
ESPECIALLY TO THOSE
WHO FOUND THERE THE FULFILMENT
OF THEIR LIFE'S TASK
THESE PAPERS ARE DEDICATED WITH DEEPEST AFFECTION
AND ESTEEM

Ad gloriam Dei in ejus voluntate.

INTRODUCTION

It is a common experience in Christian life that one knows one's duty but does not do it. And in most cases the defect is of the will rather than of the capacity.

But there is another experience which is not so clearly realized. It is that one does a Christian duty listlessly, because one has not understood its importance. Some Christians say complacently that they are not so good as they ought to be; and if they had given heed the calling wherewith they were called they would not speak so casually of themselves. Many communicants are unconscious of treating a great prerogative carelessly, because they have not taken the trouble to understand the mystery of which they are partakers.

And devout Christians suffer from the same defect. One will hear a man say that he has not thought much about the work of the Holy Spirit, or that the Church does not mean much to him; and another, who appreciates the value of prayer according to his personal sense of need, will admit that intercession is a difficult thing which he has shirked, and that he has not made a habit of giving thanks to God.

This failure to press forward is due to a variety of causes. Perseverance is the most difficult thing in the Christian life, after one has attained to a certain degree of self-conquest and the foundation of some devout habits. And perseverance is particularly difficult in the face of the passive weight of the world-opposition and the conventional standard which satisfies our Church aspiration.

We priests are often afraid, too, to ask for more than seems to be natural to an Englishman, because our faith in the supernatural is weak. We hesitate to put forward a higher standard lest we should discourage some who are not strong. And so the power of the Church is not felt in the land. We realize the power of influence in the individual life, and we ascribe it to natural strength; we do not appreciate the supernatural power of the collective life of the Church.

This little study of intercessory prayer is not likely to be read by more than a few who are already students to some extent of its practice. It is an attempt to encourage such persons to persevering progress by bringing home to them the dignity and power of its fellowship. It has no ambitious purpose; it does not pretend to be a general treatise on prayer; it makes no attempt to solve the difficulties of prayer; neither does it aim at the higher flights of intercession. It is intended only for those who are beginners in the practice, and who have either not realized this privilege of their sonship or have found difficulties which discourage them.

Students in the practice of prayer! The words

were written deliberately. It is perseverance in the practice which leads to progress; there is no short road to improvement. It matters little that one profess great faith in intercession if one do not make use of it. And it matters little that one does not know how to pray well, if one speak out of a true heart to Him that heareth and answereth.

These informal studies need not fear the criticism that now they overstep the limits of intercessory prayer and now omit an important consideration. They are not a scientific study, but a few devotional readings put out at this time when intercession has attained to a duty of unparalleled importance. And they are put out hurriedly. The writer has been hoping for several years to find leisure to supplement his little pamphlet on "A Study of Meditation" by a somewhat similar study of intercession. To-day he feels that while that leisure may never be given to him, he ought to do his best to contribute what he can to the spiritual effort that is being made by the Church to respond to the voice of God calling her to consecrate herself for the sake of the nation.

The study has been divided into six chapters. Of these the first three treat of the nature of intercession, the second three of its practice. The earlier half is the more difficult, especially the second chapter. If any readers, hoping to be helped by the reading of this book, should be discouraged by finding it too difficult, it may be useful to them to change the order of the chapters and to begin with V. and VI., then to read Chapter IV.; then Chapters I. and III. will be found encouraging;

and finally an attempt should be made to understand Chapter II.

In two chapters attention has been directed to the communion of saints. It was not possible, in either place, to introduce the consideration of the narrower question of the invocation of the saints in heaven. Yet the writer is conscious that to-day it is not possible to avoid this topic in a book upon prayer without seeming to have done so with deliberate intention. But he was not prepared to assume the practice on the part of readers, who he sincerely hopes will be of very varied Christian experience and training. He has therefore appended an article which he contributed some time ago to "Comment and Criticism," and which seems to him to present the practice in a manner suitable to this study of intercession.

D. J.

KELHAM,

VIGIL OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW, 1916.

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CHAPTER I

THE FELLOWSHIP OF INTERCESSION

SPEECH is the most familiar expression of fellowship. Not to be on speaking terms is a common form of words in some societies of Englishmen to express either a breach in intercourse or that communication has not been established. So, intimacy generally means freedom of speech, the removal of the social restraints which keep conversation on the conventional lines.

We do not usually give much heed to the deep mystery of conversation as an interchange of personalities. Nor do we give heed to the limitations of speech as an imperfect expression of personality. It is the gift of sympathy that has to supply the limitations of speech. We can remember occasions when, in spite of a mutual desire to draw together, two persons have failed to understand each other owing to differences in temperament or character. And some are familiar with an understanding so much in sympathy with one's own that what one would have to explain to another is realized almost before one has begun to speak. Silence even can be the keenest enjoyment of fellowship.

In this way we may make our approach to the consideration of intercession, and regard it as speech in

fellowship with God. Thus, let us think, in the first place, of the importance of personality in the life-history of prayer. It is probable that most Christians have suffered at some time from giving too little heed to the fact that in prayer one person speaks to another Person, and that they have thought more of what they wished to say, and even of how to say it, than either of the person who is praying or of Him to Whom the prayer is addressed. But if prayer is other than a mechanical action it is the fellowship of persons.

The special aspect of prayer, which is the subject of these studies, may most fitly be regarded as the relation which unites together the two persons of the Speaker and the Answerer, so that the one is not straining the endurance of the other by presumption, but is magnifying Him by speaking to Him according to His will. This reflection is not put into the forefront of our thoughts for the purpose of close examination, but for the sake of a practical suggestion of prime importance.

The first word that can be written usefully upon the practice of intercession is to advise any one who desires to make more use of this Christian privilege to resolve from henceforth to give himself time, before he begins to speak to God, to realize the divine personality and with deliberation to put himself spiritually into God's presence. Let him do in a brief manner what he does habitually at the opening of his meditation. If he is intending to give to intercession the same time that he gives to his meditation, even if this be only fifteen minutes, several minutes thus spent in preparation will be of the greatest value. "Before thou prayest,

prepare thyself; and be not as one that tempteth the Lord." ¹

In what follows sufficient suggestion will be found for the best use of this reverent preparation of one's self. "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." There may be a silence of approach, the drawing off of one's shoes because one is standing on holy ground. "God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few." Or one may make acts of fellowship with God, of the realization of His majesty, of the worship of His will.

It is the purpose of this chapter to consider the service of intercession as an exercise of Christian sonship, an expression of fellowship at its highest. It is a correspondence of the mind of the child with his Father. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." But intercession is nevertheless a stretching out towards what we shall be. It is the expression of the mind of Christ in our hearts; He is the true Son, and we are sons by adoption through incorporation into His life. Intercession is the movement of the Spirit of Christ within us, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

We ought not to be content to think of our sonship as a call and a responsibility, and not also to think of it as the bestowal upon us of the divine nature with its impulses of life and of correspondence with the source of life. Intercession is a breathing of divine sonship, a true *responsum natalibus nostris*. In all true sonship

¹ Eccclus. xviii. 23.

there is community of interest and of nature between father and son, which is being developed continually by intercourse and training, and wherein is revealed that deep mystery of the gradual unfolding of the father's nature in the son who reverences his father, studies his mind, and seeks to do his will.

If we approach our subject in this spirit, and look on it as entering into the mind of God by co-operation with His will, we shall realize that intercession is a spiritual study of God through the exercise of sonship. It is a work of filial intimacy, an entering into the secrets of the divine will.

And herein we find great encouragement, because we know that this is in accordance with the will of God, Who delights that His children should share in His will. So we have been taught to say, "Father, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."

We may carry on this thought a step further, and think of intercession as an expression of that sonship which has been bestowed upon us in the Beloved. We have been made sons of God through the precious blood of the Son of His love. Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is as children by the grace of God that we enter into this fellowship of speech, and we may encourage our hearts by regarding intercession as a manner of exploring the mystery of our redemption, unfolding it in the experience of our lives as we use its gift and with grateful hearts rejoice to come before the Father in Christ. "Whatever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give

it you," said the Son Who came into the world to do the Father's will by making Himself an offering for sin.

It has been revealed to us in the mystical language of the New Testament that when the Redeemer of the world said, "It is finished," the veil of the sanctuary was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and it has been explained to us that whereas the way into the holy place had not yet been made manifest, we have now boldness to enter in by the blood of Jesus. And so St. Paul says that in Christ Jesus our Lord we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in Him. We shall make it our joy to use this liberty of our sonship, and to make bold ventures within the veil by the virtue of the Precious Blood.

It is the aim of every Christian to be made like unto Christ. He knows that he is in Christ as the source of his imitation of Him. It will encourage us, therefore, in intercession, to realize that it had a large part in His life of fellowship with the Father in the days of His flesh. There were whole nights when He used to withdraw Himself, and in the quietness of the desert places give Himself to prayer.¹ Into the secrets of these prayers a few hints open the way; they unfold a life of intercession, a close interlacing of the fellowship of service and of prayer. For we must certainly interpret these hints by the prayer of intercession which is recorded by St. John,² that fellowship of the Son with the Father, in the hallowing of His name, the coming of His kingdom, and the doing of His will.

We read that He prayed at His baptism.³ Any

¹ St. Luke v. 16.

² St. John xvii.

³ St. Luke iii. 21.

Church worker will realize some part of this prayer before He passed on to the great temptation which overshadows the heralding of God's kingdom. And we may be encouraged to persevere in prayer for our god-children by the remembrance of this prayer of Him who was baptized with water but was Himself to baptize with the Holy Ghost.

He was praying on the eve of choosing the twelve¹ who were to be His apostles, the foundations of the Church through whom the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ have been handed down in the sacramental powers of the episcopate and its guardianship of the faith. Yet one of those for whom He prayed that night was Judas,² and another would require that at another time He should say, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."³

He was praying when the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray.⁴ Parents and teachers, who again and again have been privileged to teach the Lord's Prayer in the hope that lips and hearts which use it guilelessly in childhood will use it with deeper experience in years to come, and find it the expression of their faith when they come to die, will understand to some extent what was His intercession at this time, Who could say, "Neither pray I for these alone."

He had fed the five thousand with bread in the wilderness. It was a critical moment in His public ministry. The disciples had returned from an experimental apostleship;⁵ the news of the Baptist's

¹ St. Luke vi. 12. ² Cp. St. John xvii. 12. ³ St. Luke xxii. 32.

⁴ St. Luke xi. 1 f.

⁵ St. Mark vi. 7, 30-32.

death had been received ;¹ Jesus perceived that the people would come and take Him by force to make Him a king.² And he prayed.³ Then in the storm upon the sea He came walking to the disciples upon the waters, and Peter was the first to receive an answer to that prayer.⁴ But the discourse in St. John vi. makes known to us other elements of that speech with His Father Who giveth the true bread from heaven, and of that preparation of Himself for the faithful words which were to change the danger of a popular kingship into the withdrawal of those who had not understood Him.⁵ As the generations of the Church have come and gone how many have entered into fellowship with this prayer, and through it have followed in the footsteps of Christ ! We think of the intercessions continually made for the Church on earth, in our own land, under the temptations to compromise, to trust to the arm of flesh ; and we give heed to the more private intercessions for individuals who are tempted by popularity, who are pursued by flattery, or are in danger of losing themselves in success.

He was praying at another time, and His disciples were with Him. Then He said, " But whom say ye that I am ? " St. Peter's confession came not of flesh and blood, but from the Father in heaven, and to Jesus it was known that His prayer was answered. " Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." ⁶

¹ St. Matt. xiv. 12 f.

² St. Matt. xiv. 23.

³ St. John vi. 66-71.

⁴ St. John vi. 15 f.

⁵ St. Matt. xiv. 22 ff.

⁶ St. Luke ix. 18 ff.

It is not alone that timid Christians have prayed in every time and place that their children may have courage to confess the faith of Christ crucified, or that the Church on earth in their age may prevail over the spread of unbelief, and that sound doctrine may be taught fearlessly.

There is fellowship in these intercessions, and it goes very deeply into the life. It is not only that what the members of Christ are doing He too has done; it is that they are doing so because He is reproducing His own life in them. "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world. I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me. I pray for them. Holy Father, keep in Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. While I was with them in the world I kept them in Thy name. Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in Me through their word." ¹

On the Mount of Transfiguration He made His prayer.² One cannot hope to unfold its scope in a few words, embracing those who fear as they enter into the cloud, who pursue the mystical way, who experience the transfiguration of daily life by the illumination of His glory, and who find that the Cross is the road to the Crown. Yet those who are led by Him to pray for timid souls, for those who practise the interior life,

¹ St. John xvii. 6 ff.

² St. Luke ix. 28 ff.

or for those whose daily path of trial is brightened by the glory of God which shines upon it, know the fellowship which is revealed to them in their work of intercession, and whence it comes that they have been drawn to pray that men's understandings may be opened to believe all that is written in Moses and the prophets concerning the Christ and His sufferings and His entering into glory,¹ and why they are jealous of the truth of the Incarnation.

In the life of intercession we see then a true imitation of Christ as He conforms us to His likeness while we enter into this fellowship as an unfolding within us of the life of sonship. We may well say, "Lord, teach us to pray."

There is also a fellowship with the Holy Spirit to which we should give heed. Wherein we are told to have boldness we too often find great timidity. The confident voice of sonship does not easily find utterance. But the eternal Spirit, Who unites the Father and the Son, is He in Whom we are made sons of God, and Who as the Life-giver quickens in us the spirit of sonship. The Paraclete puts heart into us as He comes to us from the Father in the name of Christ, and seeks to develop in us the free life of the spirit.² St. Paul has written of the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life of prayer; his language embraces the whole experience of prayer, and is not to be limited to the service of intercession. But unhesitatingly it includes that. He says that the Holy Spirit prompts prayer and inspires it; that He takes hold of us to help us

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 25-27, 44-46.

² Rom. viii. 14-16.

in our weakness ; and he uses here the same word that St. Luke puts into the mouth of Martha when she said of her sister, " Bid her therefore that she help me," bear her part with me. " The mystery of prayer stands here revealed, as far as it can be in this life ; we see that it is the Holy Spirit Who not only inspires the filial spirit which is the necessary condition of prayer, but is the author of the ' hearty desires ' which are its essence." ¹

It is very much to be feared that the Holy Spirit is still the most neglected Person of the Blessed Trinity by the worship and devotions of the faithful. We give little thought to many of His gifts, and are content to receive them without thinking of the Giver. We appreciate the fellowship of prayer one with another, and ask others to unite with us in prayer ; and yet we do not pay much attention to the familiar words, " And the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," which dismiss us morning and evening from our daily offices. But when St. Paul described the armour of the divine warrior, appropriating boldly the language which in the Old Testament had been used of the Davidic king, replete with the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit,² he bade his Christian readers take " the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

¹ Dr. Swete, " The Holy Spirit in the N. T."

² See Isa. xi. 1-5 ; lix. 17. See Wisdom v. 17 ff. ; Eph. vi. 11 ff. The gifts appear in Isa. xi. 2 as six. The sevenfold form, as found in the first prayer of the Bishop in The Order of Confirmation, and as Christians are familiar with it throughout the Church, is derived ultimately from the Greek translation of Isaiah.

Of that communion in intercession which is here opened before our eyes, we may think first of the fellowship of the Spirit with the work of the Ascended Christ. It is useful at this point to remember that both the second and the third Persons of the Blessed Trinity have the name of Paraclete.¹ We shall think, therefore, of the fellowship of the Paraclete, Who maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God,² with the Paraclete, Who is with the Father, and Who is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever liveth to make intercession for them.³

Then we may think of our high office and dignity in the mystical body of Christ, the sphere of the Spirit's temporal mission, to be intercessors under the great Intercessor, paracles under the great Paraclete.

Co-operation in such divine fellowship is only to be apprehended by us as we are able to realize the true life of fellowship within that sphere in which the Holy Spirit unites the one body in one spirit. The fellowship of the Holy Ghost is to be to us, "not a mere idle name, but a real thing," as we exercise His gift of love, not looking every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.⁴ It is in the Spirit that Christians pray one for another, and strengthen each

¹ For the second Person see St. John xiv. 16; 1 St. John ii. 1. Advocate and Paraclete are the same word.

² Rom. viii. 27.

³ Heb. vii. 25.

⁴ Phil. ii. 1 ff. The words in inverted commas are Bishop Lightfoot's paraphrase of "if any fellowship of the Spirit."

other by united prayer. In the Church there is a real communion of saints, within which neither time nor place separates. From time to time we have appreciated this fellowship of intercession, wherein we look "on the things of others," when we have asked another, or another has asked us, to pray for some special object. In these cases we have had help at our side in our weakness. In this same realizing of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit St. Paul asked for prayers. "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me"; and, "Brethren, pray for us."¹ We ought to be less shy of asking for the prayers of others to be joined with ours, and we should value highly the privilege of being allowed to share in the prayers of another.

In this opening chapter an attempt has been made to place the co-operative work of intercession into some relation with the development of the devotional life, and to suggest that it may be used in practical application of the deep realities of our state of grace in Christ. If we live in the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.

Through the Spirit we live in the presence of God. To realize this presence is to make intercession a normal part of our daily fellowship with Him, to enter into its intimacy without losing its hallowedness. The great vision of Isaiah is the ideal after which we strive in the Spirit. The prophet saw the divine King, the

¹ Rom. xv. 30; 1 Thess. v. 23, etc.

Lord of Hosts, sitting upon His throne, and His skirts filled the palace.

“No face ; only the sight
Of a sweepy garment vast and white
With a hem that I could recognize.”

“Around were ranged the hovering courtiers, of what shape and appearance we know not, except that they veiled their faces and their feet before the awful Holiness—all wings and voice, perfect readiness of praise and service.” They are the ministers of God’s glory ; and they cried one to another and said, antiphonally—

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory.”

“Glory is that in which holiness comes to expression.” Isaiah is standing within the vision : he has seen the King ; he has touched the hem of His garment. But the contrast overcomes him. He experiences that which in a later day St. Peter knew, when seeing the power of the Lord of the seas he cried, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” To the prophet it seemed as if the threshold shook beneath him, and the mist, “which ever arises where holiness and sin touch each other,” filled the palace. “Woe is me ! for I am cut off ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” Then one of the seraphim flew to him, and in his hand a glowing stone, “no part of the temple furniture, but the ordinary means of conveying heat or applying fire in the various purposes of household life.” Yet in this palace of the King the prophet realizes the action as symbolically

sacrificial. "With tongs had he taken it off the altar." And he laid it on Isaiah's mouth and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Then Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send?" And he said, "Behold me : send me."¹

It is the vision of life as it is, under the government of God. It is the vision as it is to be realized in the Catholic Church. Apply it directly to the mission of intercession, and as a help to the realization of its fellowship, and the purging of the lips before we can hear aright, "Whom shall I send?" and answer, "Behold me : send me." All Christian life is an unfolding of this vision ; and intercession, by being a response to God's glory, is an opening of one's eyes to see the King in His beauty. "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." In this fellowship of intercession we find ourselves within the palace.

¹ G. A. Smith, "The Book of Isaiah," vol. i. chap. iv.

CHAPTER II

THE OBLATION OF INTERCESSION

It was said of the Jewish nation that it was to be a kingdom of priests. "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."¹ The evangelical prophet, who proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord, wrote that "ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God."² This is the Scripture which in the synagogue of Nazareth was claimed a few centuries later by a local carpenter as being that day fulfilled in their ears. St. Luke has appreciated the dramatic character of the scene.³

At the close of the Isaianic writings we read, "And I will also take of them [the Gentiles] for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord."⁴

¹ Exod. xix. 5 f.

³ St. Luke iv. 16 ff.

² Isa. lxi. 6.

⁴ Isa. lxvi. 21-23.

St. Paul has not written directly of the universal priesthood of Christians.¹ But St. Peter has claimed the words of the old covenant for the Israel of God. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . . Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness unto His marvellous light ; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God." ²

In the Revelation there is similar language. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." ³ And again in the vision, when the Lamb has taken the book from Him that sitteth on the throne, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints, and sing, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof ; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests ; and we shall reign on the earth." ⁴

In our days the priesthood of the laity is often on men's lips. There is deep truth in the words, but the truth is generally overlooked. In most instances the expression is used inaccurately for the prophetic office of the laity, as the witnesses and messengers of God

¹ But see Rom. xii. 1.

² Rev. i. 5, 6.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9, 10.

⁴ Rev. v. 1-10.

to the world in the dispensation of the last days when, saith God, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My servants and on My handmaidens will I pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy." ¹

The office of the priest and the office of the prophet differ throughout the course of revelation; and each is obscured by the confusion which treats them as the same. St. Paul certainly regarded himself as one who was in the line of the Old Testament prophets; ² and the writer of the Apocalypse did so likewise.³

It is in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the office of the priest is most distinctly portrayed. He is one who is chosen of God, to offer to God on behalf of men, but not apart from himself. He must be taken from among men, as one who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities; and he must have something to offer. In the exhaustive interpretation of this priesthood, Jesus Christ is the High Priest, Who is passed into the Holy of Holies.⁴

We are to think now of intercession as a priestly oblation, in union with Him Who has passed into the heavens. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest

¹ Joel ii. 28, 29; Acts ii. 16 ff.

² Gal. i. 15, 16; Jer. i. 5, 7.

³ Rev. i. 3; xxii. 6, 18, 19.

⁴ Heb. iii. 1; iv. 14-v. 10; vi. 20-x. 18.

over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”¹

What is intercession ? We must learn of Him Who for our sake became man, partaker of our human nature, that in it He might make intercession for His people ; as One who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tempted like as we are ; as One who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that He Himself also was compassed with infirmity, and in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard in that He feared, and Who, though He were Son, yet learned obedience by the things that He suffered.

A very deep reverence, as well as a natural shrinking from suffering, restrains our minds from pressing this line of priestly experience. We scarcely dare to think boldly of these words lest we should do dishonour to His divine majesty ; and we have not the courage to remind ourselves at this point that Christians are called to be like Christ, lest we should in some way encroach upon the unique prerogative of His redemptive work. But against this there sounds in our ears the solemn warning of the “*Imitatio*” : “*Jesus hath many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His cross.*” In solemnity let us recognize that the Christian priest is to exalt the Passion of our Holy High Priest, not only

¹ Heb. x. 19-22.

by boldly pleading it before God on behalf of others, but also by becoming conformed to it. He must not at this point draw back. Like Christ in His gentleness, longsuffering, endurance of sinners, but not to be like Christ in that character of priesthood which the Epistle to the Hebrews has developed ! The Christian is pledged to a life of self-sacrifice. He cannot escape from its obligation. It is involved in the universal priesthood of Christians. And herein lies the deep secret of our priestly life of intercession.

So difficult, and to some extent so unfamiliar, is this revelation of fellowship with the High Priest, that we shall do well to approach it from several sides. It is not a theological position that we seek to prove, but a spiritual apprehension of life's fellowship in oblation. We are allowed in some true manner to share through the experience of intercession in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. It is the fruit of His redemption that it is so with us Christians. If in this respect we are to learn from Christ, it is because He died for us, and by His victorious life out of death lives in us, and wills to call us in Himself to be fellow-workers with Him through the sustaining power of His life. He is the Mediator : He has always been such. From the beginning He was Mediator between God and creation ; through Him all things were made. He is such throughout the life of creation ; in Him all things cohere together. And such He is in redemption as in creation.

We cannot say in what way the unfolding of the eternal purposes of God in the world have been affected

by sin ; but revelation warns us against confining the fruits of the Passion to the individual salvation of man. And wherever the Christian pleads with God for the unveiling of His will to the world, or the manifestation of His glory to human society, He, the Mediator, is working in us within the sphere of redemption.

Let us approach the matter from another side. We know that all prayer must be the expression of the will of God, the honest aspiration that His will be done, and that he who prays may have grace to do His will. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is a condition of all prayer ; therefore also of intercessory prayer. There may be gross ignorance of God's will ; we may unintentionally, and through spiritual darkness, confound our own will with the will of God ; but if Christ can mediate Himself at all through us, however poor be the medium, however inadequately He can express Himself through such a medium, it must be the will of God that is being sought in our intercession. The Christian priest is at best a poor medium of the High Priest, but he is a medium, and not an independent agent.

Our mind turns, therefore, to Him of Whom it is written that in contrast with the material sacrifice of the Levitical priesthood, wherein were offered sacrifices that can never take away sins, He came to fulfil that which was foretold of Him in the Old Covenant. "Sacrifice and meat-offering Thou wouldest not ; but mine ears hast Thou opened. Burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin hast Thou not required : then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, that I

should fulfil Thy will, O my God : I am content to do it ; yea, Thy law is within my heart." ¹

Intercession is passing into more than we have hitherto realized ; it is exhibiting its priestly character, according to the priesthood of the New Covenant. As members of Christ's body we have our history of spiritual growth. In it, to some extent, we realize the words, " Let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." " I have been crucified with Christ ; I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Here in the life of union with Christ is the revelation of the priestly life of all Christians. The priest must have somewhat to offer. The Christian has a self to be crucified ; in Christ he is to realize himself as priest and victim, putting to death, mortifying, his self, his will so far as it is not identified with the will of God. The life of Christ within us reproduces, in however faint degree in most of us, the priestly life of the divine Victim. To be in Christ is realized to be the secret of being made like Him. Most widely this configuration to His priesthood is experienced through the Christ-life within us going out to meet the external circumstances of life, which to the Christian are not chance events, but the will of God. In them he mortifies himself. " Lo, I am come to do Thy will, O my God."

It is not the purpose of this little book to enter far into such deep things. But if we are to realize the character of intercession we must to some extent think of the character of the Christian priest who offers

¹ Ps. xl. 8-10, P.B.V. ; Heb. x. 1-14.

himself to God on behalf of others in union with the will of God, and that this character is dependent upon his union with Christ, in which union Christ the one Priest is forming Himself by drawing him into deeper fellowship with His Passion.

It has been remarked of the High Priest that He does not stand apart from those for whom He offers Himself. He has been made partaker of flesh and blood; He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; He can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. Sympathy, in its deepest significance, is a condition of priesthood.

Here and there in the Old Testament the veil has been withdrawn from that which could not be revealed in fullness until the true Priest came, Who ever liveth to make intercession. Abraham made intercession with God for the cities of the plain; it was through Lot's residence there that he was stirred to risk the anger of God against himself.¹ Moses interceded for the people: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."² It was because Moses had striven for them in Egypt that he felt himself thus identified with them.

And it is deserving of notice that both with Abraham and with Moses this sympathy which led them to the real spirit of intercession was combined with deep reverence for the character of God. The one boldly faces the Lord with the challenge that the Judge of

¹ Gen. xviii. 27, 30, 32.

² Exod. xxxii. 31, 32.

all the earth will surely do what is right ;¹ the other, who seemed never to tire of importuning Jehovah, boldly challenged Him by the memory of past mercies, former forgivenesses, and His word of promise ; and, filled with zeal for the honour of God's Name, dared to urge that if the people were destroyed in the wilderness the Egyptians would hear of it, and the divine Name would be discredited.²

Yet these were but foreshadowings of Him, Who coming down out of highest heaven, has so identified Himself with those for whom He would plead, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that He, Who knew no sin, became sin for us, and suffered in His own Person on the cross, entering so exhaustively into the fellowship of that nature which He had taken to Himself that He said, " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? "

We dare not penetrate further into this mystery, which altogether surpasses us. But we may contrast in one respect the extreme example of the Old Covenant with its nearest parallel in the New. Moses had prayed, " And if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book." In the same spirit of identification with his people, and with a similar oblation of intercession, St. Paul wrote, " I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." ³ And these are the men, from whom, in this same letter,

¹ Gen. xviii. 25.

² Numb. xiv. 13-19.

³ Rom. ix. 1, 2.

he asks for the intercessions of the Christians that he may be delivered in Judæa.¹ Again we mark the deep reverence for God's honour which penetrates these words; they are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. Can we, as we plead with God for those who would harm us, urge on their behalf that they are made in His image, that His Son has taken their nature, and that He died for them?

But it is the mystery of redemption that distinguishes St. Paul from Moses. The one cannot separate himself from the people whom he carried through the wilderness; the other knows that he cannot pray to be separated from Christ, while yet in his oneness with his nation he cannot really think of himself in Christ apart from them.

From these heights we must descend to the levels, and with becoming modesty trace out some experiences in our history of the priestly work of intercession.

In our personal intercessions we do very generally recognize the place of sympathy and of service. We pray for others who are sick or are in trouble, because we feel with them. This does not in any way make our intercessions selfish; the fellow-feeling which binds man to man is divinely implanted, and the sympathy which urges us to pray for others appeals to the heart of God. And while we pray for them, our sympathy moves us to do all that we can to relieve them. If it

¹ Rom. xv. 30, 31.

were possible we would take their pains or losses upon ourselves, if thereby we could lighten their burden.

When our prayers for others are for the supply of their spiritual needs, they make a greater demand upon us. Among devout Christians there is something parallel to the experience of St. Paul in his relation to the spiritual condition of his nation. There is a deep yearning according to the mind of God, and a great sorrow at heart over the spiritual loss, which is only to be realized by those who know the grace of God. In many cases those for whom the faithful are praying are entirely at ease in their minds, and it is the human mediator with God who bears all the sorrow vicariously, mindful also that in the heavenly temple—

“ Our Fellow-sufferer yet retains
A fellow-feeling of our pains ;
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, His agonies, and cries.”

In all these experiences one is sharing in the oblation of the priesthood. And where there is the consciousness of suffering, one is sustained by the knowledge of future glory.¹ But let us think of prayers for others, which cannot be said to involve suffering.

One thinks of many Christians, whose lives are governed by a sense of duty, and are based upon a simple faith in the Christian revelation, but who have not a strong grasp upon spiritual reality. They pray, it may be, for the conversion to God of their children ; but they seem to themselves to pray without energy. The

¹ Rom. viii. 17.

prayer lacks some of the elements which we are considering. And these persons know that, if their children were in peril of death, the prayers of their parents would be more energetic. Then they would besiege heaven's gate, and they would rejoice if they could take their children's illnesses upon themselves, and so deliver their loved ones from pain. They think nothing of the risk to their own health while nursing them night and day ; they say, too, that no expense must be spared.

It does not behove us to be cynical about such a contrast, if we think of one who manifests these two experiences in himself. There should be no spiritual contempt within us. The heart of God has been sufficiently revealed to us in Him, Who patiently supplied the bodily needs of the five thousand, and Who wearied Himself in ministering to the sick, and Who never turned away any one who brought a sick case to Him, while yet His gifts of spiritual food were neglected, and men remained indifferent to the Physician of the soul.

And if we think of what is perhaps our own case, and are conscious that the coldness of our intercessions for spiritual gifts is shown up in an unfavourable light by the reminder that we should pray very differently if these same persons needed bodily relief, we ought again to avoid too severe a condemnation. Let it suffice that we humbly tell God how ashamed we are of ourselves, and that it is because we are not better than we are that we can only pray so coldly. But on no account are we justified in ceasing from these prayers, because

they seem to us to be so poor as to incur the charge of insincerity.

It is God Himself Who has put it into our hearts to pray such prayers, and they are according to the will of God. The only thing that would make them an affront to His Majesty, and a revelation of hypocrisy within ourselves, would be if these prayers were combined with a callous indifference to the good or bad example which we set, or if they were made without any effort to distinguish between right and wrong conduct in our lives. But these prayers, however deficient, when joined with humility towards God and a spirit of honest confession of our sins and shortcomings, are not unacceptable by Him.

There is indeed such a thing as tempting God, by praying either for ourselves or for others for that which in ourselves we are making no attempt to obtain. But for our present purpose it is more important not to quench the smoking flax than to diagnose accurately the exact point at which prayers of low spiritual attainment pass into prayers of insincerity and unreality. That stage is more often reached by those who are praying only for themselves.

It is when we pass from the prayers for individuals to whom we have a natural attachment to the prayers for wider sections of mankind, or for Church work, that we begin to realize the necessity for emphasizing the oblation of priestly intercession. For here it is to be feared that often the work of prayer is treated as a substitute for service, and an easy way of fulfilling the will of God.

We are, however, to think of such intercessions as the expression of a will ready for the service of God, or as the training of the will to attain to this readiness. Intercession is to be a discipline of the heart. That which gives the priestly perfection to the great prayer in St. John xvii. is that the High Priest is passing from the upper chamber to Calvary to accomplish in Himself the will of God for the Church and for the world ; that He Who prays that all may be one has just given to His disciples His Body broken for them, that we being many may be one loaf, one body, through Himself whose body was to be broken on the Cross that by the redemption of the world He might bring in Himself into the unity of new life that human nature which sin had ruined by disunion alike in the life of the individual and in the corporate fellowship of mankind.

Let it be understood that in the illustrations which follow, taken from several large spheres, our object is not discouragement, but the training of the heart to make progress in the priestly character. We are not to expect that our prayers are as yet other than miserably selfish and poor ; we cannot pretend that the will of God is the unbroken worship of our life, or that our minds are so transformed by grace that we can see or desire His will in all things, and be ready to sacrifice life and all that we have in order that His will may be done. We may make use of intercessory prayer for the deepening of our lives ; and we should seek the furtherance of our spiritual lives in order that we may pray the better that God's Name may be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayers for foreign missions. We may begin with the realization that these are a duty, and at first we may not have a thought that we can ever have any other duty than prayer in regard to them. It may even startle us when it is suggested that the priestly attitude is that of the servant ready to obey his Master's call, and who says, "I cannot go abroad unless I am sent; but I am ready to go." There are many who can say, "I cannot go abroad, but I can pray for missions," because God has made known to His faithful servants, who were willing to obey His call, that it is not His will that they should serve Him in foreign work. But there are also very many who pray for foreign missions in order to satisfy their consciences that they are doing something, and who have not realized that the prayer of missionary intercession must be based upon a readiness to hear His voice if He should call for active service.

It would, however, be entirely false to assert that no one ought to pray for foreign missions unless he is already willing to serve abroad. There seem to be at least three stages in the growth of such intercessions. First, to pray without conscious interest, just because it is God's will. In this way one is preparing the heart to become aroused to some interest. Then, to pray with the will to serve. Here is conscious co-operation with God; and prayer is become an inherent part of one's life. Then, when God's will has been made manifest, to continue praying with submission to the glory of His will, bearing the priestly suffering of disappointment instead of the priestly service of active work.

The conversion of sinners. Here, too, if we have

been well taught, we pray at first from a sense of duty. We have learnt that the Good Shepherd seeks those that are lost ; and yet we cannot pretend to more than a very indifferent interest. But we shall not remain satisfied. We know that the true interceder is he whose heart so goes out to the wandering sheep that he must go forth to seek it. The Good Shepherd is the true priest. We know, too, that if we at all realized from what we ourselves are being saved by our safe guarding within the fold, we should have such gratitude to the Good Shepherd that our hearts would beat with His. What He desires we should desire. We know, further, that if our lives were less superficial, and we had at all deeply entered into the realization of sin by the vision of God's holiness, we should sorrow for those who are casting away life's good.

If the Master of the hearts of man is putting into our hearts the desire to make progress in intercession, what a flood of light these thoughts throw upon the whole of our devotional life, revealing it not as self-centred, but as an extension of sympathy, whereby we enter into the mind of Christ ! Or perhaps we are Church-workers, and are conscious that we have not a love of souls. We lack that touch of sympathy which drew sinners to Him Who knew no sin. It is to us the call to sanctify one's self for their sakes.¹ The life of personal religion is to lead the way in the experience of intercession, within which prayer and the desire to serve are to go hand in hand with true sympathy both with our fellow-men and with the glory of God's will.

¹ St. John xvii. 19.

One very difficult aspect of intercession has been brought before us by the experience of recent years, and in such way that one cannot fail to recognize that the Holy Spirit is ready to lead the Church into a fuller service of prayer. We have yet a great deal to learn in the way of corporateness of life in relation to intercession.

Intercession is never from the outside. We have seen this in the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Let us briefly apply this truth to the work of intercession as an exercise of the universal priesthood. The priestly life is an oblation, and it involves suffering. The suffering may be of human sympathy, it may be of spiritual sorrow for others, it may be of fellowship with Christ. Let us now regard it as arising out of that same condition of the priest that he must be taken from among men, but especially in relation to our corporate life.

Almighty God has made nations of men; He is behind national character and national life. This is involved in our conviction that nations have vocation, that they play their part in the unfolding of God's purpose in history. We are members of a nation, and we cannot separate ourselves from this fellowship. And as I am proud to belong to the nation, so too I must identify myself with its failure to do the will of God. I have no right to claim my share in England's bravery and self-sacrifice, and to deny my share in England's short-sightedness and spiritual apathy. The spirit of the Pharisee has no place in such fellowship. If I can stand on one side by myself and condemn

England's character, as apart from myself, I surrender my right to a share in England's glory. "No man liveth to himself" is a many-sided truth.

The confession therefore of national sins is an inherent part of intercession. "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips" is what we are to be shown within the vision of God's glory upon earth. The Book of Nehemiah is a book for study at this time.¹ We should study not only his prayers and confessions, but also his active service, his sufferings and his success.

It is the work of sin to disintegrate, and to increase individualism. The Christian, through his experience as a member of the Body of Christ, learns to value spiritually the fellowship of national life and of the family as being states of society ordained by God. The Christian endeavours to be a better citizen because he is a member of the Church, and does not regard his membership in the nation as being of less responsibility to him on account of his relation to the fellowship of Christ.² As a citizen of an earthly kingdom he has to make his contribution to the corporate fulfilment of the divine will of the nation. And his consciousness of responsibility to God for his share in national life is manifested in his prayers and intercessions. He realizes the loss to himself, and he tries to realize what others lose, from social barriers, from economic failures, from moral evils, from political estrangements, from party spirit, from strife in civil life, and from the other results

¹ See esp. chap. i. 3-ii. 4. And see also Dan. ix. 3-20.

² See Rom. xiii. 1, 5.

of evil which mar the unity of national brotherhood. And he knows that he has added his own contribution to the nation's failure to fulfil its divine vocation and to realize its fellowship according to the mind of God. He has sinned by selfishness, by failure to witness for God in his life, and by the narrowness of his interests. And he prays therefore as one of the body which has sinned corporately. He prays, whether by confession of sin or by intercession, as one "taken from among men," "who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he also is compassed with infirmity."

The same principle must be applied to our intercessions for the Church here upon earth. How much we have suffered in our own lives through her limitations, failures, sins, through the ineffectualness of her witness, her lack of corporate fellowship, her difficulty to realize the spirit of worship, her lack of saintliness, no one of us can realize. But we know that the Church in our country comes grievously short of what she might be; and we face this before God as ourselves being part of the Church. We are not so mean as to receive every spiritual blessing of our life through the channel of the Church's grace, and then pretend to stand outside it, criticizing it and despising it. We shall not throw all the blame upon others, and condemn where we should pray. "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips," even though I stand within the vision of the Catholic Church.

How often in Church life we seem paralyzed by our spirit of disparagement! Turn to the intercession of corporate confession, and all this weakness will be

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turned into strength, the energy of criticism into the activity of service, the spirit of fault-finding into the spirit of fellowship.

We have not perhaps hitherto realized the place of confession in the work of intercession. It may have seemed to us that we ought to confess our own sins, but not other people's sins. And now we understand that these are not other people's sins that we are confessing, but our own share in corporate life, and not merely our personal contribution to it but our fellowship in the whole.

Such confession is a true expression of intercession. Its perfect realization is in the Cross of Jesus Christ. He, Who came down and took our nature into Himself and in it hung upon the Cross, was making in His own Person the great confession of the world's sin.

CHAPTER III

THE POWER OF INTERCESSION

IN the life of grace the young knight often finds his pathway pleasant and attractive. The heart is not burdened by the graver sins of life, such as, even after absolution, leave their mark upon the character. The ways of Wisdom are full of promise ; there is sufficient demand upon strenuousness to call forth the energy of opening manhood ; and at the same time the normal experience of life is victory. The realization of fellowship with God in communion and prayer is genuine and sensible.

After a while, however, life becomes more complex. The dividing line between right and wrong is less clearly defined, as one passes from the purgative into the illuminative life. The experienced soldier realizes more acutely the evil of the world ; and in his interior life the discipline is sterner. The earlier victories have necessarily brought it about that life is no longer so manifestly triumphant. The spiritual warrior is tempted to doubt the strength of his armour or the courage of his person ; for he seems to be making no progress, and the means of grace do not bring to him the same sensible pleasures as at first. Duty rather than joy characterizes his experience ; and he is happy if plenty of external

opposition draws him off from the subtle dangers of introspection.

But if he persevere he will begin slowly to realize the power by which he lives, and that the grace of God is more to him than at first he could possibly know. His larger experience of life shows him what, but for the grace of God, he might have been. Whereas in earlier life he only realized that certain sins must be resisted, he now grasps the truth in some measure that in himself dwelleth no good thing. But probably not until old age does he return to his youthful sheer delight in being a child of God.

St. John has expressed this history in language which cannot be imitated. All are little children, whose sins are forgiven for His name's sake, and who know the Father. But they are divided into young men and fathers. The character of the young men is in their strength and victory. It is the fathers who know Him which is from the beginning, that is, the Word of God, the Life, the Light, Him through Whom all things were made, Who became flesh.¹

Without some corresponding progress in the life of intercession the first enjoyment of fellowship, and the pleasure of praying for one's friends, does not pass into the deeper experiences of priestly oblation and through these trials into the consciousness of a power that belongeth to Him in Whose hands are all the issues of life.

It is inevitable, however, that in such a presentation of life one should put forward various aspects with a

¹ 1 St. John ii. 12-14.

crisp separation that is not in keeping with actual experience. While fellowship, oblation, power, are to some extent the words which mark the stages of progress, it is even more true to say that the three are inseparable. No one will make much progress in the realization of divine fellowship unless he is ready to endure in the spirit of self-oblation ; nor will this spirit be manifested in any richness unless there is acquaintance with the power which belongs to Him in Whom self-oblation is found to be the development of fellowship.

To most Christians such experience in one form or another has presented the difficulties of persevering intercession. To a time of enthusiasm, which may or may not correspond with a somewhat limited range of prayer, there has succeeded a period of dulness. The first delights have passed away, and the attractiveness has disappeared. There remains only the quiet monotony of habit, and the passive stimulus of duty. Perhaps the conscience is troubled by the change, and there arise self-accusations of staleness and formality of spirit. Under the stress one may indeed begin to suffer from these defects ; but what actually is happening in the experience of intercessory prayer is parallel to that which has been presented as the normal history of the life of grace.

With great gentleness the good and understanding Father has wooed His child, "timid and rash, hasty and slow," into opening his heart in fellowship with His great purposes. And then He has begun to show him that the work of intercession is more difficult than it appeared to be at first. But habits have been formed ;

it is less easy now to give up intercession. And so He leads the way by degrees into the harder paths of duty. This aspect of prayer is not now so sensibly appreciated as a fellowship, but is manifesting itself as the way of the Cross.

It is at this stage that many Christians cease to persevere; they do not go on to know the Lord. The life of intercession falls back into the fulfilment of an external duty, lightly performed, for the partial satisfaction of the conscience, instead of progressing into the deeper stages of the inner life. And because of this many remain content to do what they believe to be right, and, being happily fixed by grace in good habits, they do not penetrate the secrets of the human heart, but remain unconscious of the burden of the world's sin and of fellowship with the Passion of the Redeemer. But to those who persevere there comes by degrees, as they watch with Him one hour in His agony of drinking the cup of the Father's will, the realization of the sustaining power of God in a life which apart from ghostly strength knows itself to be under the dominion of sin.¹

In this chapter an attempt is to be made to bring to our minds the knowledge of the power of intercession. Powerlessness in the Christian life is a contradiction in terms. Where such is the experience, it is because "I live" in distinction from "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." St. Paul has put before us the secret of effectual intercession in the words, "When I am weak then am I strong," although the words are used by him in reference

¹ See Rom. vii. 20-25.

to the life of grace generally. In the same letter he writes that though Christ "was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God";¹ and we may connect these words with the oblation of intercession and its power.

Weakness in the Christian life is the measure of independence as contrasted with surrender to the will of God. All true prayer is a turning to God and a turning away from the independence of self; and more and more one gets to know that in intercessory prayer the will must be submitted to God in order that His power may be called forth. Gradually the Spirit of God teaches that it is not possible to submit the will to Him in intercession apart from the submission of it to Him through the whole range of one's life.

We do not ask God to give a cup of cold water to one of the least when the little one is at our side and the cup of cold water is in our hand.² But when the little one is not near us, or the cup of cold water is not available, we ask God because it is our will in union with His that the cup of cold water should be given in the name of Christ, and with God our limitations do not have place. The weakness of our condition calls forth the strength of His omnipotence. We ask God to give spiritual gifts to others, because, while we desire to give them good things, we have not the power to give these. If we have any self-knowledge, we ask Him to give these spiritual gifts, even when we hope that they may be given through our influence, because we know the snare of a spiritual influence to draw others to one's

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 10; xiii. 4.

² St. Jas. ii. 15, 16.

self rather than to God. There is, therefore, a genuine power of intercession which comes out of the activity of dependence upon God.

No one will make much progress in intercessory prayer who does not boldly realize the power of the death of Jesus Christ. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." There is a certain danger of measuring intercession, and indeed prayer generally, by the degree of interest which is aroused within one's self, and of regarding it as strong or weak according as one is deeply stirred or only slightly moved. This is of course only the familiar snare of trusting to one's feelings, and is in effect an attempt to take the power of intercession into one's own hands rather than to realize it to be with God. And one often makes resort to prayer without consciously surrendering one's self to its power. We close our prayers with the words, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord," using them as a convenient ending and not as the fundamental basis of our petitions. But there is great boldness when the member of Christ holds up His cross before the Father, and claims the power of its victory.

A very homely illustration may help to make clear to us the difference between trusting to one's earnestness in prayer and to that victory of Christ which is the source of its power. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you." If I am standing by the edge of a river, and for crossing it am dependent upon the existence of a bridge, no amount

of will-power or intensity of desire will suffice if the bridge is not there. On the other hand, if the bridge is there and is strong enough to support me, it is still needful that I should have sufficient confidence in the bridge to walk across it. And it is confidence that I need, and not enthusiasm ; confidence to walk across it, and not merely to believe that it is strong while yet I will not use it. I surrender myself to the bridge, and it is the power of the bridge that has supported me.

When Elijah called the son of Shaphat he cast his mantle upon him. With that mantle he smote the waters and they two went over on dry ground. It was the prophet's mantle. When the great prophet went up into heaven his mantle fell off from him, and Elisha took it and smote the waters with it and said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" And the waters parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over.¹ Our great Elijah in the mantle of human nature has died the victorious death and has redeemed our nature to God. It is His mantle that we Christians wear, and not the mantle of weakness. We must smite the waters with the mantle of our Elijah, and call boldly upon the Lord God of Elijah. Unhappily we too frequently turn to intercession as Gehazi with the staff of Elisha in our hands, or as the disciples who had not been up to the Mount of Transfiguration, and who could not cast out the evil spirit. They performed the act, correctly and mechanically ; they did not realize the source of the power.²

¹ 1 Kings xix. 19 ; 2 Kings ii. 8, 13, 14.

² 2 Kings iv. 29-31 ; St. Matt. xvii. 19, 20.

The heavenly things themselves are greater than the patterns of things in the heavens. The Hebrew prophet was the pattern; the true Elijah has not cast off the mantle of His humanity through which He smote the waters of Jordan and passed over on dry ground. He has ascended in it into heaven, and yet He has clothed us in it. In intercession we do not smite the waters of difficulty with a mantle which still retains some vestige of the prophet's power; we smite them boldly in Christ with the mantle of His triumphant victory, which He wears in the heavens. In some measure this illustration may help to bring to us the truth that God has raised us up together with Christ and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Certainly intercession is in the heavenlies, whither Christ is entered to appear in the presence of God for us.¹

There is no tonic for those who are disheartened in the service of intercession equal to the stimulating consideration of the Church's fellowship with the heavenly priesthood of Christ. And it is consequently the purpose of the devil to act upon the weakness of men and to persuade them to regard the signs of evil's apparently triumphant course, flauntingly displayed in order to strike dismay to the heart, and thereby to put out of mind the ascended and reigning manhood of the Son of God, which ought to bring conviction to every son of God that he is co-operator in victory. And because we are human, it is very easy for us to be more impressed by that which is seen than by that which is not seen.

¹ Eph. ii. 4 ff.; Heb. iv. 14-16; vii. 24 ff.; ix. 23 ff.

The divine wisdom and condescension has provided therefore for the Church on earth a worship which lifts up her heart in fellowship with the divine victory, a mystical act of commemoration in which the faithful share in the triumphant majesty of the death of deaths, and wherein they join in the praises of heaven. "Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne feeds them.

It is clearly perceived by all Christians who have been taught the faith, that their intercessions centre round the Holy Sacrifice. Now, the Christian gravely limits the full value of his privilege as an incorporated member of Christ's body if he allow himself to regard the Eucharistic life of the communicant as confined to the moments which he spends before the altar at the supreme time of the offering of the oblation. As at that moment of spiritual realization he knows that the veil is lifted from his eyes, and he sees by faith that which is for ever true, so he should strengthen himself to regard his whole work of intercession, and not merely such intercessions as he makes at this time, as united with the offering of the Holy Sacrifice in the courts of heaven.

As Jesus Christ is truly present upon our altars in order that we may know that He is truly present with us all the days of our life ; as He gives Himself to us truly in our sacramental communions in order that He may be within us at all times ; as we worship God the Blessed Trinity in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice in order that we may worship Him in all the actions of our daily life ;

as it has pleased God to present to us in the Church this heavenly gift under the homely veils of bread and wine, at an altar which is also a table, whereon is spread a tablecloth, and in the manner of a social meal, in order that we may grasp that all life, in the simplicity of its homely round and social tasks, is cleansed and sanctified for us, and in order that we may call nothing common or unclean which is within the will of God ; so also are we to realize that the intercessory character of our Eucharistic worship covers the whole range of our prayers, and is not confined to the special intentions which we make in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Our realization of the power of intercession would be strengthened, and we should be encouraged to perseverance, if we were more often to begin our intercessions by acts of worship and acts of faith, to intersperse them with special acts of union with the Passion, Death, and Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, and deliberately to make by intention a union of our intercessions with the Blessed Sacrament which at every moment of the day and night is being offered to God.

And again, consider that one grace of a good communion is to increase in us the supernatural gifts of charity and faith ; charity which stirs the heart to intercede according to the mind of God, faith which strengthens us to realize the power of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the world. We shall do well to think much of this. The gift of sacramental grace in our communions is not to be limited by any narrowly conceived impression of our own needs. It is the gift of Jesus Christ Himself, divinity and humanity, spirit

and body. He gives Himself to us that He may be our life, that He may cause this mind to be in us which is also in Him, and therefore that He may quicken in us the desires of intercession, may give us perseverance in the expression of these desires, and that He may encourage us when we are inclined to grow selfish and to think more of our own needs than of the needs of others or of the will of God.

We ought to know that the will to make intercession is itself a gift of God, and that all prayer is in the heavens. We have often said within ourselves that if we prayed more we should make better communions, and that if we prayed more for others God would be more liberal in His gifts to us. We ought also to say that if we asked more boldly of Him in our communions for the grace to pray aright, to pray for others, to pray according to the mind of God, the better should we do these things.

And if hitherto we have been reminding ourselves of the power which is of God, and which is independent of ourselves, and with which we associate ourselves in intercession, not thinking as of any worth either the earnestness of our prayers or our goodness in praying, but only of the will of God in sending His Son to be the Propitiation for the sins of the world, and to be our Advocate with the Father, and to make intercession for us¹ at the right hand of God, we may, in regard to our communions, as fortifying us for the work of intercession, give heed to the power of His grace in directing our hearts to this work, and that in reality it is not we who

¹ 1 St. John ii. 1; Rom. viii. 34.

pray but the Spirit of Christ which expresses Himself in us His members.

Another aspect of the relation of our communion life to the life of intercession is to be found in the realization that our communions spiritualize our wills and understandings. Kindly human sympathy, family affection, and the like, will suffice to make all Christians mingle some intercessions with their daily prayers. One difficulty of which, however, we are probably very conscious is that we lack sufficient interest in spiritual things to pray in such manner as seems to us to be genuine. We find it more congenial to pray for temporal gifts than for heavenly tempers. We can ask God to preserve our sailors and soldiers with more consciousness that we really desire to have our prayers answered than when we pray that they may be kept pure and heavenly minded.

For this cause also we must turn with increased desire to our communions, that therein we may be enlightened in the spirit to know what the will of the Lord is and to desire it. We need to be renewed daily in our minds. Here, for example, is an intercession of St. Paul for his converts which we may profitably make a prayer for ourselves in our communions, not selfishly, but that we may have the power of effectual prayer for others :—

“ May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him ; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the

riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”¹

In trying to unfold to some extent the place of the Blessed Sacrament in our life of intercession we seem to have been passing from the thought of the power of God revealed to us through the mystery of Christ's death as a divine transaction in the heavenlies, to the thought of the grace of our communions as supplying us with the power of the Spirit. Let us, then, make one further application from this great mystery of grace, and let it be taken from the power of fellowship through the gift which enables us to realize the life of the Church.

By the grace of our communions our eyes are enlightened to grasp the unity of the Church as we kneel together before the Blessed Sacrament. We know then that we are one with the whole Church. Space does not divide: time does not separate. The whole Church worships at each altar: each altar is the same altar.

¹ Eph. i. 17-end.

And they whose names are written in the book of life are not dead but are alive for evermore. Our intercessory prayers are all eucharistic ; their spirit is that of the prayer of oblation : " We offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee." We pray with Abraham and Moses, with Nehemiah and Daniel, and with St. Paul, to name those to whose intercessions we have referred. Further, our Eucharistic worship lifts up our hearts to cry forth in triumph, " With angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name."

Now, from this reality, which in that supreme moment of spiritual enlightenment we clearly perceive, let us pass to the truth of the power of fellowship at all times that we make intercession according to the mind of God. There is no solitary intercession. The isolated missionary, praying in his out-station for the conversion of a native woman, of whom no other Christian on earth has heard, is pouring forth his petition to God in the grand chorus of the united voice of the Church of all ages. The golden vials full of incense contain that act of intercession ; for the lonely missionary is one of the living stones of that sanctuary which is still growing in the Lord for an habitation of God in the Spirit, that Holy of Holies which was typified in the Jewish Church, wherein is the true mercy-seat and the Shekinah glory of the divine presence.¹

St. Paul has made known to us his appreciation of the power of fellowship in prayer, just where we may be

¹ Eph. ii. 19-end ; Apoc. xxi. 22-24 ; Heb. ix.

inclined to despise it. It is a great thing to pray in fellowship with the saints in heaven : the communion of saints bids us not to disparage the help of others who are still compassed by infirmity. Thus the apostle writes to the Corinthians, “ Ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication ” ;¹ to the Christians in Rome, “ Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me ” ;² to the Thessalonians, “ Brethren, pray for us ” ;³ “ Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified ” ;⁴ to Colosse, “ Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching thereunto with thanksgiving ; withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery in Christ ” ;⁵ and to the Churches of Asia Minor, “ With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”⁶ From Rome he writes to his beloved Philippians, conscious that they are praying for him ;⁷ to Philemon that through his prayers for him he hopes to visit him ;⁸ to the Colossians that Epaphras, their faithful minister, is always labouring fervently for them in prayers.⁹ So also St. James writes of prayer one for another ;¹⁰ and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has, “ Pray for us.”¹¹ It is a great thing to ask all the holy saints in heaven to pray for us : it is a great thing also to ask an ignorant

¹ 2 Cor. i. 11.² Rom. xv. 30.³ 1 Thess. v. 25.⁴ 2 Thess. iii. 1.⁵ Col. iv. 2, 3.⁶ Eph. vi. 18.⁷ Phil. i. 19.⁸ Philem. 22.⁹ Col. iv. 12.¹⁰ St. Jas. v. 4 ff.¹¹ Heb. xiii. 18.

charwoman to do so. I do not think that Almighty God will be pleased that we should do the one and not do the other. The communion of saints is magnificently grand ; it is sublimely simple.

Whether we think of the power of intercession through that upon which it is based, or by reason of the power of God's grace within us, or of the communion of saints in the fellowship of prayer, we are thinking of the office of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament His work is fitly described as that of striving ; He strives with the spirit of man, and the spirit of man resists.¹ He still strives with the resisting world ; but within the Church He works by co-operation. Hence our blessed Lord spoke of the temporal mission of the Holy Ghost as dependent upon His Ascension, for in it He is working within the body of Christ. This temporal mission is therefore a work of power. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."² As Jesus Christ said that He was straitened until He was baptized with the baptism of His Passion,³ so the Holy Spirit was not free to work in the fulness of unimpeded power until that mystery was accomplished.⁴

Within the Church the Holy Spirit is revealed as the Spirit of Christ, the other Paraclete or Advocate, the Comforter, the Fortifier.⁵ As in His human nature Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism, as He was led, full of the Holy Spirit, into the wilderness, and from

¹ Gen. vi. 3 ; Acts vii. 51.

² Acts i. 8.

³ St. Luke xii. 50.

⁴ St. John vii. 39.

⁵ St. John xiv. 16 ; 1 St. John ii. 1. The usual translation "Comforter" is due to the Latin *confortare*, to strengthen.

His temptation returned in the power of the Holy Spirit, as in the synagogue of Nazareth He applied to Himself the words of Isaiah that "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," as He cast out devils by the Spirit of God, so in His body, the Church, the Spirit of God is the life-giver,¹ the source of all power and the grace which flows to us from Christ.² The highest gifts of grace come to us from Him, and all the diversity of gifts within the unity of the one body.³

He is commonly referred to as the Holy Spirit, although God the Blessed Trinity is Spirit, and is holy. For as spirit, wind, breath, He is revealed in the work of creation and life-giving;⁴ and He is to us the Sanctifier.⁵

And the Holy Ghost is within the mystery of the Blessed Trinity the fellowship between the Father and the Son, the breath of the Word of God. He is in the Church likewise the unity of fellowship.⁶ When St. Paul writes, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God," the whole passage oscillates round the thoughts of unity and purity.⁷

In this brief reference to the office of the Holy Ghost our thoughts have naturally been directed to Him in relation to our prayers one for another. It is "for the love of the Spirit!" that St. Paul beseeches the Roman Christians to strive together with himself in prayer.⁸ Intercessory prayer is the vital expression of fellowship

¹ St. John iii. 5.

² Rom. viii. 9-17; xv. 19.

³ Gal. v. 22; 1 Cor. xii. 1-xiv. 1.

⁴ Gen. i. 2, ii. 7; Ezek. xxxvii. 1-14; Acts ii. 1-4; St. John iii. 8.

⁵ 1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Rom. xv. 16, etc.

⁶ 2 Cor. xiii. 14; Eph. iv. 3, 4.

⁷ Eph. iv. 30.

⁸ Rom. xv. 30.

in unity. A large field of it is in the prayers for the sanctification of God's elect. St. Paul writes, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." ¹ It is He Who in the plenitude of this power is to enrich us with the spirit of hope as we draw near with boldness to the throne of grace. It is in the Spirit that we pray, and the Holy Spirit directs our spirit, and expresses it for us in ways which are known to the great Searcher of hearts.²

There is at all times much within ourselves, and in the world without, to discourage Christians; fightings without and fears within. And the more they turn to God the more they realize the deadness of all that is apart from Him. The world cannot receive the Spirit because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but He dwelleth in the Church.³ Christians are very conscious of their spiritual dulness and of their inability to realize the things of God otherwise than faintly; nevertheless "we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."⁴ And the Spirit receives the things of Christ and shows them unto us, for all things that the Father hath are Christ's.⁵

It is written in the Acts of the Apostles, which book has been called the Acts of the Holy Ghost, that the Churches, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort (*paraklesis*) of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.⁶

¹ Rom. xv. 13.

² 1 Cor. ii. 9-11; Eph. vi. 18; Rom. viii. 26, 27.

³ St. John xiv. 17.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 12.

⁵ St. John xvi. 14, 15.

⁶ Acts ix. 31.

As we try now to gather up some of the gifts which since the Day of Pentecost have been bestowed upon us with liberality, it matters not whether at the moment we seem to have been learning fresh matter for intercession on behalf of the Church in our days, or to have been thinking of the building up of ourselves as efficient workers in the great fellowship of prayer; "for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." ¹

But we shall have come to one conclusion of a certainty; in whatever ways we can give new life and power to our ministry of prayer, we will of a surety resolve to encourage our faintheartedness by calling upon the Holy Ghost to enkindle our hearts, and to teach us how to pray aright and in the spirit. And that our prayers may be the better, we will invoke His holy Name, when in the power of His gifts we draw near to God to make supplications and prayers on behalf of others. Christians too rarely address prayers directly to the Holy Spirit.

"O God, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us."

"Come, Thou Holy Paraclete,
And from Thy celestial seat
Shed a ray of light divine.
Where Thou art not man hath nought,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from stain of sin."

¹ 2 Tim. i. 7.

CHAPTER IV

THE RANGE OF INTERCESSION,

It is probable that priests assume without sufficient warrant that their congregations are alive to the fellowship and power of intercession. But when lay people are moved to speak, they often affirm that they have not been taught how to pray. Of course they know how to say simple prayers, and they can ask for what they are conscious of needing very much. But they realize that prayer should grow to something more than this, and that they need instruction not only in the faith but also in the practice of Christianity.

A few years ago the writer was expecting an invitation to address a body of men ; he was hoping to speak to them of the complicated relation of Churchmanship and citizenship at the present time. He was disappointed, to his shame he acknowledges it, when the invitation came as a request to speak to them of private prayers. It seemed like an opportunity lost. Of course these men knew how to pray ; they would not be members of this society unless they prayed. It seemed as though there was nothing that one could say. But it was difficult to refuse the invitation ; and there seemed, as one thought about the subject and about the audience, only one thing to be done. One must speak to them

quite simply, and as to those who needed to be taught. Deliberately all temptation was put on one side to deal with the moral or scientific difficulties of prayer, to discuss the manner in which prayer can be conceived as influencing the will of God, to define prayer, or to aspire to high flights of experience. With some fear that offence might be given, the writer spoke to them as men who had asked him to give them simple instruction in the practice of prayer.

There has never been any doubt in his mind that he did the right thing that evening. Nor has he now any doubt that if the Spirit of God has led any readers of this study of intercession to realize more clearly than heretofore the importance of this large field of prayer, it is desirable that the study should be carried into the practice of intercession.

So from the spirit of intercessional prayer we must pass to the consideration of its matter. Where the spirit is willing, the practical difficulties are frequently elementary. There shall, therefore, be no false shame of simple writing upon simple subjects.

In this chapter the range of intercession shall be considered; and then it will be convenient to discuss some of the difficulties which arise out of its practice.

And, first, there is the broad question of arrangement. Shall we begin from God and work downwards in narrowing circles to one's family, or shall the process be reversed?

The Lord's Prayer would seem to suggest that one ought to begin with the glory of God and His kingdom, and then pass on to daily bread. Now, in any science

there is the twofold order of discovery and instruction. One may proceed from what is near at hand, and gradually extend one's experience until at last one is able to generalize and to arrive at universal laws. This is the order of discovery. It is intensely interesting, but it has the disadvantages that most people will be unable to proceed very far, and that sufficient use is not made of the results of other people's labours.

In most cases, therefore, it is better to follow the order of instruction, and to present first the universal laws in their broadest outline and proceed to their application. This is the order habitually adopted by schoolmasters. They can do nothing else. But they are painfully conscious of its limitations. The class has to take too much for granted, and consequently there is a certain lack of interest and of the stimulus of original work. Discovery is more exciting than instruction. And most scholars drop their subjects before advancing sufficiently far to become discoverers for themselves.

In some subjects, as, for example, in the usually very dry lessons of geography, it is possible, if the teacher is a live man, to present the science as a voyage of discovery by the pupil. And history and geography may be combined very interestingly. One can begin from the physical conditions of the neighbourhood, and, by a little elementary geology, pass by degrees to the world. One can talk of local plants and food products, and move outwards to the food supplies of our table. From whence do we get our currants and our tea and our sugar? By what means do they reach us? And how did we get into relationship with those countries?

Another term the lessons may be graduated in a different manner. Local history can be brought into play. There is an old flag hanging up in the parish church. Why is it there? We shall be led to the complications of the Crimean war. If we had the good luck to live in Canterbury, and if, further, we had Dean Stanley as our teacher, this would be as fascinating as anything that can be imagined. Rudyard Kipling could do it. And indeed in any place there are records of the past, and even an ordinary teacher can and very often does open the minds of his pupils in this way by rambles in the neighbourhood and by local history. And with the pupils with whom it is successful the seeds have been sown for a future harvest of original research and discovery.

Perhaps the most fatal objections to this method of procedure are that it makes too much demand upon the average teacher, who cannot be expected to be a man of original and fertile mind, and that the pupil is expected to become acquainted within a few years with a large number of facts which along these lines he will only slowly, if ever, get to know. It is not education that examinations seek to test, but knowledge. The parent is not concerned with the development of his child's mind, but with his equipment for a commonplace competition of life.

Now shall we, in this chapter, start as students of the science of intercession, and develop the range of it from the lines of God's glory, God's kingdom, and God's will in human society, until we come down to the parish church, the neighbourhood, and one's self?

Or shall we embark on a voyage of discovery, and work outwards from ourselves, proceeding from particulars to universals ?

This question is not so trifling as it may seem to be, when one realizes that actually, if our intercessions are to grow, we must be content to occupy certain broad spheres very thinly at first, and hope to fill up some of them later. We are not, of course, thinking here of the order to be adopted in a book of general intercessions, or to be followed throughout a week's or a month's course. We are thinking of our own education.

It might seem, therefore, as if the right order would be that of instruction, and that we should lay down the broad outline of intercession, and leave it to each one to fill in the details.

But for one important reason it will be wiser to choose the method of discovery, even if it suggest a certain selfishness and narrowness in our intercessions. We are endeavouring to arouse ourselves to the proper spiritual desires ; we seek to become original workers, as we gradually explore the glory of God through the fellowship of life's growth. One purpose in this chapter is to offer help to the practical difficulty of interest and the sense of reality in intercession.

Thus while it may be thought that we ought boldly to face intercession according to the mind of God, and deliberately resolve to put the local and personal as far as possible out of sight, it often happens in spiritual matters that what seems most highly pitched is in reality less rightly pitched.

Humility has a great part to play in the devotional,

as in other aspects of life. The man who affects to care nothing about his neighbours, because all the world is his kin, is not the man of universal sympathy, but the man without sympathy. That man's heart is more broadly human who cannot bear that the children next door shall starve, than is he who says that it is of no use to help these three or four while all Belgium and Poland are starving.

And it is not merely that the personal appeals to our sympathies, and it is well in intercession to make use of this powerful weapon. If indeed that were all, it might be that a bold idealism would be better than the diplomacy of seizing hold of the most effective means. But Almighty God has given to us our lives that we may make them His through the relationships which He establishes in them. The Holy Spirit stirs us through our knowledge of life, turning all our experience Godwards. Intercession is human and sympathetic.

We ought to be convinced that the good Father of the world and of each of us has placed every one into his own lot in the inheritance of His Israel, and that He means each of us to start from his own appointed place and work outwards in ever-widening circles according to his life-contacts. To learn for ourselves what is to be our share in the corporate fellowship of prayer we must find that the Spirit, Who brings to us the things of Christ, and Who leads us into the true reading of life, is with us in our daily life, turning it into prayer, so that we may grow up into the mind of Christ.

Thus for each one there is his own range of intercession, known to God, if not yet realized by himself.

It begins from family, neighbourhood, and local church. It grows with life's growth, social, intellectual, and spiritual. For intercession is a corporate responsibility, and there is differentiation of function among the members.

Variety of life's vocations makes up the fulness of intercession, covering the whole range of society. Intellectual interests and endowments differ to so much extent within any social area, that two members of the body will not express their petitions alike. And spiritual understanding has no necessary relation to social or intellectual position ; but each must pray as God gives him to see the things of the Spirit.

Many persons, who have tried to use intercessory prayer, have turned for help to books of intercession. They have found in them subjects important and spiritual. But they have been discouraged. They have not found themselves able to throw themselves into them ; and the resolution to practise intercession systematically has flagged. And they have failed to see that they were already practising intercession in their private prayers, and that all that they needed was to extend the range of them—as by degrees they were taught of God to bring more of their life under His control. They have neglected the intercessions which arose out of what God gave to them in the history of their own lives, and they have become disheartened by an inability to use prayers which were spiritually beyond them.

Let us then face our range of intercession, starting very modestly ; we shall soon find that the circles enlarge.

First, we have been made members of a family and

of a household. That bond of fellowship is sacred. It must be revered ; and the more highly we reverence it, the more shall we find that these intercessions are not only for material but also for spiritual things.

Family and household are not identical. The house is the unity of the common roof which shares the common loaf. It often includes servants and lodgers. It may be that the household prayers are left to the servant, and that while she takes upon herself the burden of the whole house, she has not realized that perhaps she has been put there by God for that purpose. It is strange, but true, that in religious observances there should be fashions. Once it was the first external mark of a Christian household that there were family prayers. One may readily allow that the exigencies of modern life have made it very difficult to gather the household together ; but to deplore the necessity which has led to the discontinuance of the practice is insufficient. The loss is great, and there is loss of spiritual vision behind it. It is to be feared that we have lost the religious bond of the common roof, just as we have lost the family pew in church. Religious divisions are partly responsible. But specially there is the loss of the sense of a household under the guardianship of the Divine Householder, of the priesthood of the head of the house, of the Church which is in the house.¹

¹ Another example of the change of fashions is the discontinuance of grace at meals. One might have thought that the words of the Lord's Prayer, the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, the authority of Holy Scripture (1 Tim. iv. 3-5 ; 1 Cor. x. 31 ; Rom. xiv. 6, and see Acts xxvii. 35), and the practice of our Lord (St. Matt. xiv. 19, xv. 36 ; St. Luke xxii. 19 ; xxiv. 30, 31) would have been sufficient.

The family is often scattered, and even if sons and daughters are still under the common roof, father and mother have brothers and sisters for whom they pray, and for their households.

From the immediate circle of the family we pass to that of friends and acquaintances. These are they whom God has given to us that we may pray for them. How often is it that we seem to have no opportunity of spiritual intercourse or mutual help! Our friends do not talk to us of the things of the spirit; and we scarcely know if we are too cowardly to speak to them, or whether it would be unwise to force an opportunity. It may be that God cannot give us an occasion because we have not attuned ourselves to it by intercession.

There is also the bond of union with the neighbourhood. We are not able to believe that it is by accident that we live where we live. The Christian's life is not haphazard. He is where he is in order to be God's remembrancer in that place. He may not know much about his neighbours; but he knows that there is family life around him, that individual lives have their temptations, their anxieties, and their needs. He knows probably that there are certain local dangers, snares, and responsibilities. He can pray for his town or his village under general headings, marking specially any local phase of life or of social work.

And then there is the parish, the Church of God in the locality, with priests, Church officers, communicants, Confirmation classes, the baptized children. And there are lapsed communicants, and there are the heathen in the parish. Many parishes flourish in organization,

and are dying from lack of intercession. There is no parochial prayer meeting to train the faithful. There is the missionary guild for the few who are interested ; but there is no school of prayer to pray in detail for the parish in all its variety of life within the unity of the Church, and to be a training ground for a solid body of intercession daily by the members of the Church who throughout the week are scattered upon what is too generally thought to be, and is not merely called, secular work. If the teaching of the parish were built up round the daily sacrifice, and people were taught not merely to think of the priest as interceding for his people, but to think of themselves within the Body of Christ as sharers in this fellowship, perhaps there would be more parochial intercession from the different households, and Church members would learn to regard their daily lives, not as secular, but as their ministry within the Church.

In these three ranges of intercession which are our immediate contacts we may learn a great deal about the range of intercession, prayers for persons, prayers for social life, prayers for the Church. And each of these may be extended, as we give ourselves to the work.

In most families there are father and mother, a son and a daughter. The father and mother may think of other fathers and mothers. Not all fathers in England realize themselves as representing on earth the Fatherhood of God. One has heard of the poor child who, when taken into a Christian institution, and taught the Lord's Prayer, screamed at the words, " Our Father, which art in heaven." But do not confine your

sympathy to extreme cases. There is very great need of prayer for people who are comfortably and even happily situated. Often they are ignorant of the things of God. The respectable families are possibly the most neglected class.

There are many mothers who have not the ideal of the *Mater Dei* before their eyes. And these too are not only drunken women or outcasts. Mary Magdalene may become a saint; but there were many mothers in Israel in our Lord's day who loved their children tenderly, who brought their little sick ones to Him to heal them of their diseases, and who even crowded round Him and heard, "Suffer the little ones to come unto Me," and who nevertheless did not themselves come to Him to be healed of the diseases of their hearts.

Daughters will realize a duty to pray for daughters not so happily placed as themselves, but who are living in the midst of temptations which come out of an unhappy or unguarded home, or a life of self-indulgent idleness. And sons, who appreciate the blessing of a mother who is to them almost the image of God or of a father whose uprightness and good example have guarded their paths so that they have been led almost unconsciously into right habits, will wish to give thanks to the God and Father after Whom every fatherhood on earth is named, by praying for those who have not these blessings or who having had them have been like the prodigal son or his even more unhappy elder brother.

Those who truly seek the glory of God by the fellowship of intercession, and to whom it seems as if He had specially invited them to this service, people of leisure,

or invalids, may find great interest in extending this connection of the personal with their life of conversation with God. They generally have a certain correspondence with those whose lives are more in the busy world than their own. From them they hear of the great road-makers in India, or of the busy life in Canada. Sons, brothers, and nephews are frequently kind in writing letters full of news which will interest such an one who lives a retired life, and who in return can send only the small news of the home, and the neighbourhood, of which they like to read in their far-off stations. Many a man, who is supposed by those who know him to have no home ties, will secretly bring a letter out of his pocket in the evening to read for a second or third time that the roses have been beautiful this year, just as they were when you were last home.

Is there not here a true vocation of intercession? We may have read in mystical writings of some who have prayed to receive in their own persons the sicknesses of others, and have actually been permitted to take upon themselves, as substitutes, the pains which others were enduring. This has seemed to us possibly almost too much to be believed, or we have doubted if it is right. But no one will hesitate about the rightness in God's sight of undertaking another's share of intercession, and making it an offering to God on his behalf.

In a similar manner let us pass now to the extension of the local sphere. Even the village has its rich and its poor, the farmers and the labourers. If it has not its workhouse, hospital, almshouses, or orphanage, at any rate one or other of the villagers has gone to one of

these institutions. If one live in a town one must be singularly lacking in imagination if one cannot realize the throbbing pulse of its life, its industries, institutions and organized charities. What problems of human society are suggested by these words ! And each problem is a subject for intercession. Day by day it may be that in walking to church, or going to the office, one passes a technical school of science and art. The board may not have suggested anything to us. But why not think of it ? There are science students and art students. Science, the wonderful sphere of investigating the order and the wisdom of God. Art, the study of the divine through the medium of revealed beauty in shape and colour. Is this what these pupils are learning them to be ? Might one not help them by one's prayers so to learn ? I suppose there is not one of us who has not received some good in his life as an answer to prayers of which he is ignorant.

A man can scarcely be fulfilling his duty as a Christian if he have not a sense of responsibility for the exercise of his vote in municipal elections ; he may be, perhaps rather against his ^{own} inclination, but from a sense of Christian duty, a member of the town council, and so have a fuller and more definite conception of the complexity of corporate life than have many of his neighbours ; consequently his prayers will embrace these subjects in a different way. He recognizes the social, ethical, economic, and political complications of the body corporate. He exercises his mind upon them ; he studies. And as a good citizen he prays about them. We shall have to return to this.

Let us do now with the third circle what we have been doing with the widening of the personal and local circles. From the parish church we pass to a very large subject. We go from the congregation to the diocese, with perhaps some intermediate details if one is closely in touch with Church organization.

It is here very possibly that some book of intercessional headings is of use. One wishes to pray intelligently; but one scarcely knows enough about Church life to do so. When one has thought of bishops and priests, Church officers and communicants, of parochial organizations throughout the diocese, and of certain diocesan organizations, one's mind becomes a blank.

But possibly one is a member of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and can use its devotions intercessionally, praying for sound sacramental teaching, for good communions, for the spread of Eucharistic worship; and one can make acts of reparation for neglect, and for unworthy communions. Or another realizes the importance of a sound teaching of the faith, possibly through an unfortunate local experience; he will pray also for the catechisms and for Sunday schools, and for the Confirmation instructions all over England. And he will of course pray for unity, for the removal of ignorance, misunderstandings, and prejudice.

To one who is in the habit of making meditations it may be suggested that it is very useful to find headings for intercessions from them. Such an act may often be the best resolution to take away from one's meditation. And one's meditation is frequently upon the Church.

It is so wonderful and spiritual a creation, that we can only hope to realize ourselves in our true native land if we frequently think of it. And in this way we shall grow in the desire to pray for the Church as the glory of God upon earth, and as the witness of Christ's life to the world, and thus we shall find ourselves interceding before God for faithfulness among Christians, for a more active witness-bearing. And of course we shall commend to God the faithful departed, who are one with us in the living Body of Christ.

And especially there will be foreign missions. Here, too, some little book of intercessions may help us, for after praying generally for the conversion of the heathen and for missionaries, we frequently find ourselves wishing to know "what sort of things to pray about."

From the Church we will pass to the great world. Our foreign missionary intercessions have taught us to pray for the non-Christian world, and our enlarged Church circle has included evangelistic work among the Christian nations, and prayers for the union of Christendom. Often it occurs that we are praying for more than we realize. The "prayer for the clergy and people," and the petition in the Litany for the illumination of all bishops, priests, and deacons, are prayers for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth. We cannot deliberately will to confine these prayers to our own communion; but in our ignorance we may not perceive that we are praying, for instance, for the Bishop of Rome. Likewise, when we pray, "And to all Thy people give Thy heavenly grace," and "That it

may please Thee to bless and keep all Thy people," we are making our petitions without limit. To God alone is it known who are His people.

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind ;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

There is no need at this stage to expand ; sufficient has been written about the share of the individual in the detailed intercessions for all sorts and conditions of men. A large number also of these prayers will have a wider range than we realize. But while in these and other ways we are frequently praying for the great countries of Europe, for the United States of America, and elsewhere, and while we pray deliberately that it may please God to give to all nations unity, peace, and concord, not merely that England may not be at war, but also that the other countries of the world may be at peace within their own borders and may prosper, there remains to each Christian a duty to make intercession for his own country.

It is humiliating to think that we who boast of being a Bible-loving people remain very ignorant of the great lessons which the King of the nations has been teaching us through His choice and preparation of a particular nation, and through the revelation of His purposes with heathen nations.

And because we have not realized national vocation we have failed to appreciate other than very dimly the development of Great Britain into a world empire with a divine task to maintain and to spread that freedom

which is the condition of all sorts of expansion and growth. It is always true, individually and nationally, that we are straitened within ourselves. Because we have not dared to see the nation in the sight of God, but in this respect have been puritans, and have thought that a nation cannot be Christian because there are a great many tares in the field of wheat, we have allowed ourselves to regard politics as secular. And now we groan over the spirit of partisanship with all its evil results upon social and moral and religious life ; and we do not realize that God has given us according to our desires, and has sent leanness withal into our souls.

To some extent, through the expansion of the heart which is God's gift to those who long sincerely for the extension of His kingdom, we have appreciated and revered those national elements of character which have fitted us to be successful colonists, and a people capable of nursing and developing the backward races of the world and the ancient and decayed civilizations of India and Egypt. But we have accepted these elements of character as natural, and have tried to use them to good ends, rather than looked upon them as divine gifts. It is sad to think how often the State prayers, the prayer for Parliament, and the petitions in the Litany are regarded almost as conditions of a formal establishment.

We know, however, that we have been born Englishmen by the providence of God, and we are justly glad of the fact. But for the soundness of national character, for the highest principles to govern a noble statecraft, for the uprightness of commerce,

for the growth of a good moral tone, for justice and equality between men, for a right judgment on such complicated matters as the guarding of our streets against greater evils than horse traffic and pickpockets, for the sanitary condition of our homes, for the adjustment of our life to the rapid increase of women's labour, for the education of children, we have neither prayed systematically nor have we been taught to pray.

There are many sides of life which in themselves may not be either Christian or non-Christian, but which make a great deal of difference to the conditions under which generations grow up and are moulded, according as the conditions of society are leavened by Christian influence or are neglected as outside the Christian sphere.

It is difficult to think of any Epistle in which St. Paul has faced more definitely the whole responsibility of the Church than in the pastoral letter to St. Timothy. There was the little Church in that large imperial city of Ephesus with its complexity of social and economic life. St. Paul wrote a letter to it which deals broadly with the whole Christian polity ; and he took the same wide view which was taken in darker days by the writer of the letters to the seven Churches of Asia Minor.

The Church in the great town was ultimately the intercession for the city. "I will not destroy it for ten's sake," God had said to Abraham. So St. Paul wrote that it was a matter of prime importance that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for all men ; and he mentioned first the heathen rulers, men past praying for, as a faithless Christian would say. And he added, "that we may lead

a quiet and peaceable existence in all godliness and honesty.”¹

We are to pray for the conditions under which life is spent, that they may be favourable to well-doing. And St. Paul went on to explain that Church life was to be so ordered that the household of God in Ephesus should by its good behaviour hold up to the heathen world the witness of truth in daily life and conduct.²

Later on he used the pregnant words, “The living God, Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.”³ It does not seem as if these words were exhausted by such an interpretation as that God wills to save all men and actually does save all believers. Must we not look a little closer into the ways of God?

There is a tone of the family life, the tone of a school; and there is also the tone of a factory, a colliery, a town, and a nation. Is not that tone its salvation? It is certainly something spiritual, and it is distinguishable from the sum of individually faithful Christians therein, although it is very intimately and directly dependent on the faithfulness of their behaviour.

This tone is of the greatest importance to the conditions of life. No godly parent in choosing a school for his boy, however much he knows his child's life to be one of grace, is indifferent to the tone of the school to which he will send him. He recognizes that in some schools the tone is more healthy than in others; and he who prays, “Lead us not into temptation,” does not wittingly send his boy to the school with a low moral tone, any more than to the school with a low educational

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 1 ff.

² 1 Tim. iii. 15.

³ 1 Tim. iv. 10.

standard, or the school with a poor tone in athletics, or the school which lies in a swamp. He wants his boy to be able to lead a quiet and peaceable existence in all godliness. He does not want him to go to a hothouse ; but he wants him to have a fair chance.

Now, life as a whole is governed by similar conditions. We want it to be reasonably hopeful that the rising generation shall come through life's temptations well. We desire as Christians that the tone of our city and of our country shall become higher ; and we know that the general tone depends very much upon a number of conditions which seem to a casual observation to be very material and unimportant. We know, too, that as these conditions are improved the Church will become stronger ; and that as the Church grows stronger, the better will become the tone of that larger human society for the sake of which God has placed her in the world as His witness.

Does not this help us to realize a very large sphere of almost secular intercession ? And the word " secular " seems to mark the neglected scope of intercession ; for it would not be secular to us if we had already brought it within the range of our prayers. Archbishop Benson used to say that there is nothing common or unclean in life except sin.

It may be that these suggestions will show us something of what is at any rate one meaning of the words, " Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." We are to enter into this large field of sympathetic prayer as English Christians, realizing that righteousness exalteth a nation, and also that men become as they pray.

In an earlier chapter it was brought to our minds that intercession is not an easy substitute for service. Now we may begin to see how innumerable are the openings for service, and what an error of judgment it is for men and women to leave the world to better itself. If we learn the truth of that which we have been picturing to our minds, we shall not leave municipal activities entirely to those who are actuated indeed by pure motives, but who do not realize that in the service of their fellow-men they are co-operating with God.

We ought to reflect also that intercession is not solely the work of women, because they cannot engage in the more public service of life, and therefore must pray "instead"; but that it is very specially the work of men, who by reason of their more public life know what to pray for that their activities in life may be sanctified.

A last reflection shall carry us back to the work of the Holy Spirit, that great source and power in all prayer. The Holy Spirit is always working in the world of human society. By His breath it lives. He has not left the world; He strives in it. It is in full fellowship with Him that we make intercession for all estates of men, for the conditions of human life, for the tone of national character. There is no prayer wasted, which is made under His impulse and in union with His never-ceasing work of patience in the life of mankind.

CHAPTER V

THE PRACTICE OF INTERCESSION

IN the preceding chapter many practical questions were left on one side, of which we are now to treat. This is the opportunity for some of those little matters which often trouble those who are trying to enter into this life of fellowship. And if some of the points touched upon should seem trifling, the writer's excuse must be that correspondence with unknown persons, and even with those who are joined together in a bond of intercession, has shown that these difficulties really exist. They are the difficulties which theory may ignore, but practice reveals.

A beginner is often faced by obstacles that the experienced person cannot realize. The writers of school books generally set themselves specially to face these very difficulties against which their successive school classes have stumbled term after term. And it is with the hope that these chapters will be read by students of prayer, and not by very advanced students, that they are written. Advanced pupils do not need the kind of help which is the only kind that the writer is capable of offering; he knows that he is not qualified to lead others into heights of experience of which he himself is ignorant. But as a fellow-student, who has

found that some of his own difficulties are the difficulties of others, he will neither be too timid to look at them nor too proud to acknowledge their existence.

A start shall be made from some very common spiritual difficulties. There are those who realize the duty of intercession, and who do not doubt the efficacy of prayer. They desire to do their duty, but are conscious of listlessness in its performance, or they recognize that they do not know what to pray about. They can pray earnestly for what they really want, but find it very difficult to pray satisfactorily for what does not personally interest them. Perhaps some of what was written in the last chapter may have thrown light upon this difficulty of listlessness or a sense of unreality.

Frequently it happens that this special discouragement springs out of the use of books, unsuited to us, or used too slavishly. The use of books of intercession is very similar to the use of books of meditation. They are useful for a little while; we must not become subject to them. They are usefully turned to now and then for fresh suggestion. We may get help from other people's experience; but the work has to be our own, and to come out of our own life.

One must, however, face this question of apparent failure or inability. To say, "Throw away your books," is heroic, but is not helpful by itself. And the difficulty was probably the first reason for making use of a book.

Now, any one who faces this deficiency in himself, and who tries to make intercessions and seems to fail, or who continues to make intercessions and to be very dissatisfied, ought certainly to be spared the accusation

of selfishness. The selfish person will not use intercession when he finds it irksome. The one who is in our minds now is he who struggles to do better, and is dissatisfied that his intercessions seem cold.

Such an one may be making either of two mistakes, or both of them. He may be ascribing too high a value to conscious sensations. That is one thing. He is perhaps inclined to think, although he does not actually realize it, that his requests are almost lifeless because he does not feel very keenly active about them. Duty drily performed is the pith of his self-criticism. Now let him consider well that the best quality of an acceptable prayer is that it is based upon the will of God rather than on his own. He is praying, not because he wants to pray, for the pleasure of praying, but because he wills to seek what God wills. When he is disheartened let him say from time to time during his intercessions, "Thy will be done," or "Thy kingdom come."

It is, one would imagine, more easy for a man to beg something for his own child than for another child. But if he put constraint on his shyness or his pride to beg for a strange child, one would scarcely accuse him of any fault if he did not feel so warmly about the pleasure given to the child of a strange father as he would do were the child his own.

This lack of enthusiasm is no barrier to the efficacy of intercession, although it often proves a deterrent to perseverance. It should not be the lack of warmth that ought to trouble one so much as the probability of having fallen back in perseverance.

The other mistake to which one is liable in this stage of experience is that of having over-estimated what is demanded from him. One has no right to suppose that he has attained to a highly spiritual state. For example, one ought not as yet to expect to feel broken-hearted over the many unworthy communions which are constantly made. And yet one knows that they are a great insult to the blessed Lord, and a great grief to His heart, seeing that while He is longing to give rich blessings He is nevertheless restrained. Now, shall we say that such an one of whom we are thinking ought not to make any acts of reparation, or to pray for the conversion of unworthy communicants? That would be to say that one may pray with the feelings only, but must not pray with the understanding and the will apart from the feelings. Feelings must not be made the guide of life. The prayer of the will and of the understanding is always an act of worship and of faith.

A simple illustration is perhaps more to the point than any labouring at this perplexity of the feelings. A boy has been very rude to his tutor, and the headmaster has told him to apologize. He refuses, on the ground that it would not be honest to do so, because he is not sorry. The headmaster reasons with him. "You have been very rude." "Yes, sir." "You ought not to have been rude." "No, sir." "Then you know that you have done wrong." "Yes, sir." "Then go and tell him so, and do not bother about your feelings. You are only wanting to delay your apology until you feel that you wish to make it; in other words, until you can please yourself by apologizing. It will be a

much better thing for you to make your apology now, and compel your will to master your inclinations."

This has a very close application to much in our spiritual lives. Some only pray when they want to pray, only ask forgiveness of God when their feelings prompt them to do so, only praise God when they cannot help doing it, and only make supplication to Him when they want something very much, although it is for some one else that they want it. All this points to a very emotional religion, without the solid basis of principle and will. And there is too much in it of making use of God for our own ends. And while our spiritual lives are what they are, there must be a great many things which we know to be according to the mind of God, in which we must exercise fellowship with Him by will and by understanding.

We must not yet expect to have the feelings of a saint, or even to be so devoted to the will of God that we shall be enthusiastically moved to intercession of a highly spiritual character.

A certain limit must, however, be placed upon this line of thought, or we may easily run into unreality and the sentimental affectation of a higher spiritual reality than that to which by the grace of God we have attained. All prayer is in the spirit, and its mover is the Holy Spirit. It is well not to make intercessions for things according to the mind of God unless God Himself has revealed to us that they are so. No one will be well advised to use the prayers of any book just because they are good.

God gives to us to realize that which He invites us

to pray about, and prayer comes out of an understanding which is of the heart. No man can pray another man's prayers. But no man should be disturbed about the unreality of his intercessions in any matter which he can see for himself to be a call to prayer, on the ground that he does not feel what he is praying. And incidentally it may be added that such prayers are educative, although that is not one's motive for making them.

The essence of all this investigation is that one must flee from the temptation of scruple, and pay very little attention to one's feelings. It will suffice simply and humbly to confess to God that one is sorry that one does not feel more warmly ; and then one may think of the fellowship of prayer and of the communion of saints.

The most obvious example of this difficulty of suspected unreality is in prayers for foreign missions. Many Christians feel very coldly towards them ; but no Christian can doubt that they are according to the mind of Christ, that the Church exists for the conversion of the world, and that every Christian ought to pray that the glory of God and His kingdom may be extended. He just must pray for foreign missions. He may even think that they are badly managed ; we often do think that the things which we have never tried to do are being bungled by others. Then there is the more need for him to pray that they may be better worked.

In the chapter upon the oblation of intercession nothing was further from the writer's mind than to suggest that, for example, because one is not yet ready to offer one's self as a missionary one ought not to pray for missions. One is not likely ever to become a missionary

unless one begins by praying for missions. It was the attempt of that chapter to get to the very essence of intercession in its deepest character, and to strike at the root of that error which glibly turns to prayer as a substitute for service. Now, one may see how humility and confession should mingle themselves with many of one's intercessions, which are made because they are according to the mind of God, and of which we realize that our response to His mind therein is woefully lacking. Something, too, of fear mixes itself with our prayers at times, the dread that He may answer our prayers by putting it into our hearts to go.

There was once a man who prayed for fifteen years for the Carthusians. He was not interested in them except by an intense sense of their deprivations. He was afraid of them ; he did not admire them. It seemed to him that their life was horrible ; that it could not be acceptable to God ; that they were cut off from all that God made men for. Then he entered a Carthusian monastery.

It is right now to turn to some of the more practical and commonplace questions.

There is the difficulty of praying for what we know nothing about. Sometimes one is asked to pray for persons under initials. A guild obligation may compel one to ask God for a blessing upon A. C. V. and H. W. T. It seems unreal. Now, doubtless if one went about the world selecting such unknown intercessions it really would be fantastic. One might pray for everybody who lives in a corner house. No doubt such persons want praying for as much as other people do ; but we are not

justified in playing tricks. But if the anonymous persons are associated with us in a guild, it would seem that either we should pray for them under initials without scruple, or we should resign the guild membership. And truly there need be no unreality in such prayers. Almighty God knows who they are, and the guild member would be none the wiser if he knew that the names were Arthur Charles Vernon and Henry William Trott. And are we never to pray for persons who are unknown to us? There are many lonely sons of the Church who must depend largely upon the support of unknown brothers. So consider well that in such cases one is making an act of faith in the value of prayer, and that this in itself is an act of devotion.

Missionary intercessions often present this difficulty. It is very hard to pray for a string of foreign places and names which one cannot even pronounce. Przemysl would have been a stumbling-block until recent years; and it requires a little effort of the imagination to pray for Deacon Mkwana. Now, the answer to this is as simple as possible, apart from any guild obligation. On the one hand, these names are not unknown to God nor to some missionary diocese which has put them into its intercessions, and wishes for prayers. And, on the other hand, there is no reason why you should pray for them by their name, if your imagination does not rise to peopling the town or personifying the deacon, and if your interest in the particular mission is not very detailed.

The details of missionary dioceses are often a trouble. Many people wish to pray for a certain diocese. They

know a worker in it, or they are interested in the country for some reason. But one can pray for a country or for a diocese without putting one's self under an obligation to pray for obscure stations which mean nothing to him. Such details assume a lively interest to those who have been reading the magazine, and it is for them that they are intended. They have studied the mission and know its isolated stations ; they have followed with Christian sympathy the lonely work of the pioneer missionary, and are glad to help his work by their prayers. To them the unpronounceable name is not so senseless as it is to you, nor is the unmentionable deacon a mere figure. At the worst they are praying for an unknown friend ; at the best they are helping to build up the communion of saints.

One wants to exercise a holy freedom over one's intercessions. Take what is suggested, and boldly put a pencil through the headings which seem to be meant for some one else. If one has a number of missionary magazines, and not much time to pray, or much knowledge of the details of each mission, make use of the general headings, and leave the particulars.

Use a similar independence with books of intercession, if you use them at all. A certain book has suited me admirably for two years ; now I seem to have grown tired of it. Am I going downhill ? Not at all ; but I cannot lastingly use other people's books, just because they are other people's books and not my own. For a little time I found freshness in them ; now I have unconsciously enriched my experience to some extent, and it will be better for me to throw the book aside. I have learnt

all that God meant it to teach me. There is no sin in giving up a book which one has once used.

With the same freedom we come to the difficulty of overcrowding. Both time and capacity for prayer are limited. Yet as the years go by, a generous-hearted person has become overstocked with intercessions. What is he to do ?

There is no reason why he should not pray for an object for some time and then give it up. We may surely pray for something for a year and not be under any scruple that we are wrong if we do not pray for it for the rest of our lives. Of course I shall pray for my invalid mother so long as she lives ; and longer, only happily she will not be an invalid then. But some one knowing of my mother has asked me to pray for his mother who is also an invalid. I do so. But I am not called upon to pray for her as long as I pray for my own mother. It is not selfish or cruel, if after a time I transfer this prayer to some one else. There are some who seem to feel qualms of conscience about dropping any intercessions. Drop freely : life goes on, and other things are coming into it. This applies also to prayers for the departed. Perhaps one has remembered a friend for a year, and one scarcely likes putting one's pencil through his name. But the list of the faithful departed is growing, and one knows that there must be some limit. This name must now pass into the general heading of all the faithful departed.

This question of overcrowding ; let us tackle it again. Be sensible. Combine intercessions : shorten the wording ; give up the use of the collects which

only say at length what can be as well prayed for in fewer words. Many foreign dioceses and societies have such collects, and if one joins any guilds of prayer or associations one seems pledged to use the collect. Every priest knows of the difficulty that is felt by devout persons in guild obligations and the like. Why must I pray for Waiapu, South-West Africa, and Jamaica in three collects, when I can say, "Thy kingdom come in Waiapu, in South-West Africa, in Jamaica" ?

Arrange that some intercessions be used only once a week or once a month. It is better not to use the same intercessions daily. One is more apt to say them perfunctorily.

It is of great value to revise one's intercessions from time to time. Life varies in experience, and the spiritual life moves on. Let any one, who has at all made a beginning, get a penny notebook, and head it on different pages for the days of the week, and make out for himself a little scheme. It does not matter how it is done ; but there must be eight pages, of which the first is headed "Daily." He cannot give much time to intercession, for he is very busy, and he has other prayers to make, for himself, acts of confession and thanksgiving and worship, preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communion, devotion to the Passion, the Holy Spirit, and different devotions at different seasons. And he has his Bible to read. So the intercession book may look very mean, and doubtless it will have great gaps.

Gradually the spare lines will get filled up. Now and then the pencil will be drawn across a subject ; it is done with, or merged into another heading. After

a few years of experience a new book will take the place of the old one. Possibly at first one only divided up headings into the seven days ; now perhaps one has devised a scheme.

The book of private intercessions is becoming a record of one's progress through the sanctification of life by prayer. A number of items are those which are peculiarly one's own. Some of them will seem trifling to other people ; not to the good God. The artist's book of intercession will seem almost sensuous to some, who do not appreciate the relation of beauty to truth, or the revelation of God through colour. The journalist's book will contain some headings which may seem to others to be scrupulous in their prayers for honest writing.

There is a difficulty which arises out of prayers about other people's faults and limitations of character. One does not feel very comfortable over praying about them in detail. It seems as if one was criticizing rather than praying ; and these faults are no worse than one's own ; and perhaps one may misjudge. One has something at the back of one's mind that this is not very different from the thing that one makes fun of about the chapel prayer meeting, where people are popularly supposed to pray at one another. The accusation is without sufficient justification ; but it must be admitted that the story generally emanates from a chapel source. It is about on a par with our poor little stories of the Church services ; and both alike come from the person who is present at the service but whose mind is not in union with it.

Together with this difficulty may be put that of not knowing what to pray for. One can appreciate Festus' perplexity in sending a prisoner to Rome and not having any certain thing to write unto my lord. But perhaps it is not so easy to understand this difficulty in intercessions. Yet it is often felt to be awkward to have a name to bring before God and to have nothing to say about it. And others are hampered in their prayers because they feel that they cannot make up prayers.

These troubles would seem to be based unconsciously upon acquaintance with books and the prayer meetings, where of necessity the prayers are composed. It may be of some service to suggest that in private intercessions it is often found very valuable not to formulate any petitions at all, nor even to compose sentences. The Lord's Prayer may be used at the beginning, and again at the end, of one's list of names, or of missions, or of societies, or of states of society. Or one may say after each person or subject, "Lord, hear my prayer and let my crying come unto Thee."

Very useful, too, is the practice of gathering one's intercessions round the life and passion of our Lord, pleading it as the power of one's prayers. "By the cross and passion of Jesus Christ, hear my prayer." When we pray for children we may vary it to, "By Thy birth and holy childhood, Good Jesu, bless them." For the sick we may not know whether to pray for their recovery or for a happy death; or we may, quite needlessly however, have scruples about praying for recovery from a sickness which God has sent doubtlessly for some good purpose. Wing the petitions with the words, "Through

Him Who bore our infirmities," or "For His sake Who healed the sick." Other intercessions will suggest the use of the Holy Spirit's name. Just now and then one may find a collect that exactly sums up all that one wishes to say. For the revival of family prayers, or for the increase of Bible reading, or for reverence towards the Holy Scriptures, there is the collect for the second Sunday in Advent; the Whitsunday collect for such perplexing problems as are suggested by our complicated social life, when perhaps we are afraid to formulate prayers lest they should be the expression of our conservatism or socialism rather than be strictly according to the mind of God. When we pray for different estates of men we may like to make use of the collects for Trinity XVII. or XIX.

It is easy to believe that these attempts to meet certain practical difficulties will have raised others. Perhaps the suggestion of trying to make one's own book of intercessions has been discouraging. "I can never do that." There is no reason why you should. It has only been thrown out as a suggestion to meet some of the difficulties of overcrowding, the dissatisfaction of books, the growth of life's experience, the development of spiritual knowledge. Pray as God gives you to pray, and pray, "Lord, teach me to pray," and do not bother further.

But others are perhaps distressed at seeming to have their books despised. They have found them helpful. Suffer a few words here, while one tries to point to another way. The book has been very helpful, because you did not know what things to pray for, and now you value

the book which has led you to make intercessions. But is there not such a thing as training one's self to speak in one's own words? What would you think of a little child, whom you invited to tea, and who, when you asked her a question, hurriedly took out a piece of paper from her pocket to answer you in correct words? "How is your mother, dear?" "Thank you very much for inquiring after my mother's health. She is as well as can be expected at her time of life and with the anxiety of housekeeping, and a large family of troublesome children." Now, would you not much rather hear, "Muvver's all right, fank you"?

And with the great Host and Father, to whom each one of us is a little child, and Who likes to hear us in our own words, we can talk freely. There is no difficulty about the composition of sentences or even over grammar. Do not get self-conscious with Him. It does not shock you when the little child prays, "Please God, make me a good boy, and give me a new top." You know that it is far better that he should pray thus than that he should be stilted and unreal in his prayers. Do not be stiff with God. It matters not that many of our grown-up prayers are really very like "Give me a new top."

At the risk of becoming burdensome a suggestion shall be made as to the possibility of meditational intercessions, and intercessions arising out of confessions of corporate sins. Possibly we try to make meditations and find them very difficult. Do not give up the attempt, but try to weave a great many intercessions into them. Instead of trying to think out thoughts, think humanly ;

and as you kneel before God, or go about your housework in the quiet time, when the children are at school, lay these thoughts before Him. To-day perhaps it is Friday, and the words in your mind are, "Forgive us our trespasses." "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Plead for your enemies, for those who have injured you, for any whom you may have wronged wittingly or in ignorance, for those who suffer wrong, or are oppressed, for those who do not pray for themselves, or who do wrong, for the unforgiving, the malicious, for those who are leading others astray, for those who sin ignorantly by laughing at goodness or at the truth, for those who make false confessions. Probably certain names are introduced ; God will not misunderstand, or think you uncharitable. He knows that you mean their good. Then gather up the prayers in and through the passion of Jesus Christ. And thank God that through Him St. Stephen was able to pray, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," and that countless others have done so since then by His grace.

Or it may be Tuesday, and there is a little time for what is perhaps not exactly a meditation, but something just as good. You are thinking about God ; and your thoughts are on the words, "Thy kingdom come, in earth as it is in heaven" ; for possibly you like to pray for a few minutes each day of the week on one clause of the Lord's Prayer. So the words of intercession are given to you. The unconverted, lapsed communicants, foreign missions, Church extension, blessing on all the baptized, the instruction of little Christian children. Certain persons are named ; your godchildren, a neighbour who

has had the children baptized because he was tired of being worried by the vicar. And then you think of the saints in heaven, who do God's will perfectly, and you thank Him for them, and put in a word for yourself, and then you think to praise God for the Ascension of Jesus Christ, and you pray that Christians may set their affections on things above.

On another day you find yourself thinking of the words, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." You do not know why the words are running in your head. God has put them there. They will come in for to-morrow's meditation. These are some of the ideas which run to and fro within you, as an informal preparation of your subject, until you are beginning to wish that it was time for your morrow's meditation. What grace St. Paul had to be able to say this! How like that great apostle to write this in return for their material assistance! I ought to be more generous than I am, for He will surely in return lead some one to pray for me. I ought to pray also for those who do me good, and are kind to me. I ought also to be able to trust God at all times, if St. Paul could do so after lingering in confinement so long. Yes; I must pray for those in difficulty, for those who need grace, for those who are losing faith, for Christians who seem unable to grasp the spiritual. And then you think of the Blessed Sacrament, the supply of all your needs, and thank Him for it. And so, as we say, your thoughts wander on from subject to subject, and you do not check them, but you turn the response of your heart to God in intercession and

thanksgiving. It is all very informal. You may not make much out of books, or the composition of books, or out of elaborate schemes or elaborate ranges of intercession. But be sure of this, that the impulse of intercession grows with use. The tongue of the heart becomes unloosed to God. The words flow as the shyness wears off. There is no need now to get the piece of paper out of one's pocket to find the correct speech.

In an earlier chapter reference was made to acts of confession for corporate sins. These acts are in themselves of the nature of intercession. And they will suggest intercessions. As the Holy Spirit leads us to see sin and to flee from it, we realize not only the glory of England, but how sad it is that, being what she is, our country should be stained with so many blemishes. Not that she is worse than any other country ; but that we are so proud of her that we would have her far better than any other country. So we confess the sins of our people to God, and intercede at the same time. Every day we seem to find something fresh to confess and to make supplication for.

And our own private examinations will show us many graces for which we may pray, not only that ourselves but that others also may receive, and many sins from which we shall pray that others also may be delivered or kept free. And this suggests another practice of intercession. It is very valuable as a counter-agent. Our examination of sins will give many acts of intercession which can be used as acts of reparation. Have I lost my temper to-day, because some one tried my patience ? Well ! other people are tried, and other

people lose their temper. Pray for them. To-day I laughed at drunkenness : so I will pray for the restoration to grace of drunkards, and for temperance workers, and for those who are tempted to drink. And what of my habit of uncharitableness ! I am always suspecting persons of bad motives, and I judge others harshly and do not make allowance for them. I cannot quickly forgive, or heartily accept an apology. I know it. I must use the collect for Quinquagesima Sunday daily for myself. But also I will pray at least once every week for others who are like myself, and for the growth of a spirit of charity among my neighbours, throughout the parish, among people on opposite sides of a question, for different sorts of Churchmen, for that other parish in the town which is so unlike my own that we look at one another with suspicion as though we did not use the same Prayer-book, or meet together at the altar. And I will pray for the increase of better understanding among Christians, and for Church unity, and for Non-conformists, whom I do not like, but who, I am sure, must have many good persons among them. What a lot there is to pray for ! And I used to think that I could not find anything to say to God.

This chapter has been deliberately informal. It has been an attempt to help others, it may be, to realize a little of the freedom of intercession from all formality. It has somewhat deprecated reliance upon books ; it has gone on to state that there is no need even to substitute our own self-made books or even schemes of intercession, although where this can be done it is very useful. We should always try to do well what is worth

doing. And we have tried finally to show how, if we yield ourselves to God's Spirit, we may find ourselves entering into a rich field which we thought to be altogether beyond our reach. And now there remains for our last reading the crowning joy of fellowship.

CHAPTER VI

THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

NOT until the last few pages, and even then only incidentally, has any reference been made to thanksgiving. But the connection between thanksgiving and intercession is intimately close.

The holy Gospels teach us that faith will pray, believing that whatsoever was asked for has been received.¹ In that spirit, thanksgiving will accompany the prayer, and not wait for the proof that it has been answered. When the seventy returned with joy, the Lord rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." In their mission He had beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.² At the grave of Lazarus, before He called him forth, Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me."³

Thanksgiving is even more an expression of true sonship than is intercession. There is an exercise of fellowship whenever the child of man acts boldly upon the grace of his adoption and speaks to his Father of that which he wishes Him to do. He is not afraid to ask a favour of Him. He will soon venture to importune Him, not fearing to wear Him out. It is the Son of Man Who has encouraged him to pray in this spirit; but even

¹ St. Mark xi. 24, R.V.

² St. Luke x. 17 ff.

³ St. John xi. 41.

He wondered whether, when He came again, He should find such faith on the earth.¹ But thanksgiving overcomes the daring of such importunity by the boldness of its spirit. Knowing that it is using the Holy Spirit, which a Heavenly Father has given, it rejoices to ask that it may receive ; it penetrates by intercession into the hidden secrets of fellowship, and gives thanks for the favours which it receives. It behaves like the child who coaxes things out of its father, and when teased for being troublesome, laughs and says, "But you know that you like giving."

There certainly will not be much penetration into the mysteries of intercession without a corresponding growth in the habit of thanksgiving. And as intercession becomes more clearly a habit of life's fellowship with the will of God, thanksgiving will take an increasing place in it because of the joy that it gives to the heart of the Father. It is inconceivable that His love, as it has been revealed to us, can be indifferent to response ; and no question of the impassibility of God, or of the difficulty of conceiving how His joy can possibly be increased, will ever, thank God, prevent Christians from knowing that they are unable to think of Him in any other way than as of One Who can be grieved and can be pleased,² Who feels with us in our sorrows and shares with us in our joys.

This joy is given to be enjoyed, not to be analysed. But it will be realized by us that at any rate one aspect of His joy is His knowledge that thanksgiving is both

¹ St. Luke xviii. 1 ff. ; xi. 5 ff.

² Eph. iv. 30 ; 1 Thess. iv. 1.

the evidence of a right mind in us and a wholesome practice. It is the expression of contentment and gratitude, of a mind free from self. It helps to brace us to meet the trials which are sure to come ; and it keeps us out of many temptations.

There is a great mystery in Christian experience. It is that so many Christians seem to find their religion a burden, and not a joy : it makes them look on the dark side of things, and become peevish ; they seem afraid to be happy ; almost they seem to look upon a bright or lively spirit as a mark of superficiality or of worldliness.

For this, which certainly does not attract others to the Christian life, there are various causes. Sometimes one is spiritually uneasy ; afraid of God's wrath and the consequences of sin, and yet not able to throw himself with recklessness upon the divine mercy of the more abounding grace. Another is not directly burdened by sin, but has not realized the power of God. He fears for himself at every moment, lest he should sin. He knows the weakness of his heart, and the force of temptation, but he does not know the strength of God. Another does not make life into a fellowship with God, or with man.¹ He feels alone. Another is really self-centred ; he cannot get away from looking at himself.

And of others it would be more true to say that they see the sorrows and sins of the world and feel powerless to help. They see so much evil around them that they almost come to think of themselves as on the losing side.²

¹ See 1 St. John i. 1-4. ; iv. 20, 21.

² See St. John xvi. 32, 33.

“The world is very evil,” is the uppermost thought of their heart. They do not look up.

But through the fellowship and power of intercession, liberally combined with thanksgiving, we are meant to enter into the joy of heaven. It was at the prospect of His Ascension into the life of victory that Jesus expected His disciples to rejoice.¹ The analogy of the vine, the life and fellowship of mankind in God, was given to be a source of joy.² The oblation of intercession has its secrets of joy also.³ “Inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy.”⁴ The gift of the Holy Spirit was to bring the joy of fellowship with Christ to His disciples, together with such freedom of speech with the Father that their joy should be fulfilled.⁵ The fruit of the Spirit is joy;⁶ the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost;⁷ the Thessalonians received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost,⁸ and St. Paul bade them to rejoice always, and combined the injunction with, “Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to youward.”⁹ To the Romans he wrote, “Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.”¹⁰ And to the Philippians, “Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication

¹ St. John xiv. 27-28.

² Heb. xii. 2; 1 Pet. i. 6-10.

³ St. John xvi. 22-24.

⁷ Rom. xiv. 17.

⁹ 1 Thess. v. 16, 17.

² St. John xv. 1-11.

⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 13.

⁶ Gal. v. 22.

⁸ 1 Thess. i. 6.

¹⁰ Rom. xii. 12.

with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." ¹

St. Paul will be a good guide to us as we think of the service of prayer and thanksgiving. He has given it as a chief charge to Timothy that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men. It was certainly his own practice. He reminds the Thessalonians that he is bound to give thanks for their spiritual blessings and their progress in them ; ² he gives thanks for the Christians of Corinth, that they were enriched in everything, so that they came behind in no gift ; ³ he wrote to the Romans that he thanked God that their faith was proclaimed throughout the world ; ⁴ to the Ephesians, that he does not cease giving thanks for them, mentioning them in his prayers ; ⁵ to the Colossians, that he thanks God for them, praying always for them that they may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, and thanking God that they are made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; ⁶ and to his beloved Philippians, that he gives thanks for them upon every remembrance of them, making supplication for them with joy. ⁷

He charged the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit, to make melody in their hearts to the Lord, to give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ The Colossians were to sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord, and in all that they did to give thanks to God. ⁹ When in

¹ Phil. iv. 4-6.

² 1 Thess. i. 2, ii. 13 ; 2 Thess. i. 3, ii. 13.

³ 1 Cor. i. 4 ff.

⁴ Rom. i. 8.

⁵ Eph. i. 15 ff.

⁶ Col. i. 3 ff., 9 ff.

⁷ Phil. i. 3 f.

⁸ Eph. v. 18-20.

⁹ Col. iii. 16, 17.

prison he and Silas sang praises to God at night,¹ they were following the example of those who were in Christ before them, and who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ.²

Intercession and thanksgiving go together. The more one looks out upon life to find something that one can bring before God's attention, the more one will be finding things in life for which to give Him thanks. The more one realizes the personal fellowship of life in Christ, the more one will desire to thank Him for it. And, in particular, it may be said that we ought to try to find a corresponding thanksgiving for each intercession. If one prays for the conversion of sinners, one may thank Him for the many whose hearts are turned back to Him. If for the sick, one may thank Him for one's own health, for the blessings of sickness, for the grace given to the sick.

Especially, therefore, watch those personal intercessions which terminate after a while because the special need has passed away. How sad it is to think that these often just come to an end without any doxology! It is a good practice, if one have a little book for jotting down one's special intercessions, to see to it that the pencil is not put through any of them until the thanks have been rendered back to God for all His goodness.

So far as could be accomplished, these readings have avoided the subject of one's own prayers. But no one will have had patience to follow these pages unless he is one who is in the habit of praying for the needs of his own life. It is quite possible to pray for one's self selfishly,

¹ Acts xvi. 25.

² Acts v. 41.

to pray like the two daughters of the horseleach,¹ and never to add a "Thank you." If one do not practise thanksgiving in one's own life, one is not likely to think it of any service in intercession. "I will sing unto the Lord because He hath dealt bountifully with me"² ought not to be less a Christian practice than a Jewish.

Why not read Psalm xiii. and think about that last verse? Doubtless you have many trials: most people have. But why not review God's loving dealings with you rather than the history of trials? The trials may have been great, but you have been carried through them. It was He who gave you grace to endure. And there have been spells of quiet times in between. Think of them, and give thanks for them. Reckon up the blessings instead of looking to the darker side of life.

Think, too, of the spiritual history of your life. Though you have fallen from time to time, yet you have not been cast aside. Put God's goodness over against your sins, and thank Him for it; His faithfulness against your unfaithfulness; His love against your coldness; His perseverance with you against your slackness; His patience against your impatience; His extravagance of charity against your ingratitude. Thank God.

Learn, too, to make thanksgivings for others, for their graces, their happiness, their goodness. It is a splendid tonic. But also look out to make thanks for those who do not do so. There is so much ingratitude in the world. Pick up the neglected thanks from all over the place, and offer it to God. Intercessions would

¹ Prov. xxx. 15.

² Psa. xiii. 6.

not suffer loss if they were curtailed for the sake of giving of thanks.

The parable of the Ten Lepers brings this truth of man's ingratitude before us. It was one out of ten who returned to give thanks, and he was a Samaritan. It often happens that we who have not been strangers from the Church of God by any habitual neglect of the means of grace are surpassed, and greatly surpassed, by those who after a sad exile have found their home again. Are we not to thank God for His grace, because we have only been selfish and careless in the use of it, and have not actually thrown it aside? Is there not a special grace to thank Him for, that in spite of ourselves He has not left us to wander outside the settlements of God's people like spiritual lepers?

Apply this thought to the Church. It is so easy to grumble about one's own Church. The priests are not all that we should like them to be; the services are not at the right time; the music is too loud; the vicar is a poor preacher; the ceremonial annoys us. Is it not something to set against these trifles that you have a church within easy access, and do not have to go several days' journey for your rare communions? It sometimes seems as if we must lose our blessings before we can appreciate them.

But there is worse than this. Who does not know something of a discontent which amounts to loss of faith, because one will not count up one's blessings and give thanks for them, a perpetual fault-finding, as though nothing ever could be right with us?

But where are the nine? Was it not here in England

that we received the grace of Baptism, were taught the Creed, learnt to pray, were confirmed? Are our communions not the Body and Blood of Christ? Then return to give thanks to God. We are ungrateful. We must count up our blessings, make better use of them : it is within ourselves that we are straitened.

We may not be able to check directly this spirit in others ; but we can attack it very effectively by acts of thanksgiving for the life of the Church in our land, the continuity of grace, the religion which seasons life, and raises the tone of the country so that very many who do not seem to be directly influenced by it are nevertheless indirectly affected.

In " A General Thanksgiving," to be used before the two final prayers of the Litany, or of Morning and Evening Prayers, an unrivalled scheme is provided, which if duly expanded in private use covers the whole range of thanksgiving, and is addressed to the Father of all mercies.

Creation : for my life, the opportunity of glorifying God, serving Him, bringing others into His kingdom, helping others ; to be in God's image, to have the prospect of an eternity of happiness.

Preservation : for health, deliverance from unknown dangers ; eyesight, the powers of hearing, memory, and understanding, during all the years of the life of my pilgrimage.

All the blessings of this life : power to enjoy them ; reading, music, the beauties of nature, the enjoyment of labour, the comforts of home, the pleasures of holidays, the gift of friendship.

Redemption : the revelation of God's love, brought out of darkness into light ; to be a child of God, the joy of fellowship with God and with Christians.

The means of grace : the Church, the Word and Sacraments, Christian environment, prayer, the grace of the Holy Spirit, an inclination to pray for others, grace to respond to God's voice, many answers to prayer.

The hope of glory ; the present illumination of the future, the fellowship now of heaven's denizens ; the support of knowing that the faithful have departed this life in God's faith and fear.

This expansion gives also subjects of thanksgiving for others. Thank God that others also have the blessings and pleasures which you enjoy. Thank Him for the grace given to them, and for their response to it. Thank Him for the grace given to you and to others alike, which has not been used, although it was freely offered. And make further intercessions as acts of thanksgivings for blessings received. You have been brought safely through a severe illness. Resolve to pray daily for a month for the sick of the parish. You have prayed for years, oh ! so earnestly, and yet at times almost despairingly, " Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee ! " And at length your prayer is heard. Your heart goes out to God in gratitude. This blessing you never forget. Night after night you thank Him for this eldest son, now doubly a son. Would it not be very pleasing to God if you undertook to pray once every week so long as you live for a like joy to other parents ?

If one seriously cultivated this spirit of giving thanks

one would find so much good in the world, and in the Church, that one's face would shine as the face of him upon whom God had lifted up the light of His countenance. It is the cure of all ills ; it removes depression, it dispels gloom, it checks self-centredness, it is the spring of hope, it is a fount of charity.

What has been written of the work of the will in intercession against the tendency to think that such prayers are only genuine if one feels like praying them, is at least equally true of thanksgiving. Turn to it by an effort of the will. One may be such a stranger to it, that one feels out of place. One's heart may be so crusted over with selfishness that the words of thanks seem lifeless. Force them to come. You can tell God that you do not feel like thanksgiving, but you know that it is a right thing, and you are doing it. Call upon the Holy Spirit to give you words of thanksgiving. If you can do nothing more, use the General Thanksgiving slowly. Vary the strain of the effort by direct praise. Praise and thanksgiving are very closely allied. Say the 103rd Psalm, or the 146th ; and have no scruples.

I know that I often thank people when I do not feel like it, either from shyness or some other cause ; and I know that I should be exceedingly rude if I did not do so. Why is it that we do not think of ourselves as being rude to God ? We are shocked when men turn their back habitually upon the Lord's Table, and when they reject His invitation. Is there not a corresponding behaviour in the indifferent use of thanksgiving by those who cannot plead that they know not the Lord, but have

tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious ? Surely we shall not be content to say that we do not feel like thanking God for anything just now !

It has been suggested that our self-examinations may provide material for intercession, and that we may use such prayers as correctives. The advice is no less applicable to thanksgiving. This, that, and the other are my chief faults. If I cannot serve God better in my life in these respects, I will at any rate thank Him that others do so, and that in them He is glorified. I have committed this sin to-day : while I ask His forgiveness I will thank Him for it by offering Him thanks for those who have been kept this day without sin, and for those who have been faithful to Him in that wherein I have not been faithful.

Most useful is thanksgiving as a corrective to certain special sins, such as grumbling, and uncharitableness, and jealousy of the good of others, and narrow-mindedness, and brooding, and self-centredness, and many other of the less open-hearted and generous states of mind. To illustrate would be to repeat what has been written. Let a few subjects be suggested in order that they may find those who will make use of them. For the light-hearted happiness of children, and their laughter ; for the songs of birds ; for the worldly enjoyment of the godless, because their joys keep them out of sin, and help to keep their hearts kindly ; for the goodness to be found in many heathen ; for the kindheartedness of many bad men ; for the immense charity of many overworked persons ; for the liberal-minded ; for those who forget self ; for the bright lives of people in dull streets ;

for all the good that there is in the world ; for all the grace given to others.

Sometimes one scarcely knows if one has sinned or not. A thought of jealousy has entered one's mind ; one has seemed to feel pain that another's work was praised and one's own taken for granted ; one has felt neglected. A pang of regret—or was it of envy ?—has passed through one's mind when one has seen a mother surrounded by her children. Make an appropriate act of thanksgiving as a reparation, and then put the thing entirely on one side.

Some intercessions may well be combined with a general act of thanksgiving that God always hears and answers prayer, and is wont to give more than either we desire or deserve. And it is good to crown one's offering of fellowship with God in intercession with direct acts of praise and adoration. Intercession sometimes halts because it is not wafted on the wings of praise. Intercession and thanksgiving combined lift up the heart to praise and worship.

When we started together upon this subject, it was recommended that before approaching the mercy-seat we should take some little time to realize the presence of God, to think of Him as delighting to hear our prayer, of the work of fellowship with Him in intercession. Now, perhaps some will like to begin or close their service of intercession with acts of thanksgiving and praise, or of worship. Hymns are very useful in this way. "Praise to the Holiest in the height" ; "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty" ; "Bright the vision that delighted" ; "O for a heart to praise my God" ; "O

Holy Ghost, Thy people bless ” ; “ Lord, teach us how to pray aright.”

Intercession, thanksgiving, praise, adoration, worship ! They are part of one’s preparation for heaven, whereby one’s heart is lifted up to where one’s treasure is. It is mainly in meditation that one learns to think of heaven ; but this service of fellowship and of oblation will contribute. Will not one include at times a thanksgiving for that place which Jesus Christ, as our Forerunner, has gone to prepare for us ? for that blessed home of rest and peace and joy ? for that fellowship which now one realizes only in part ?

St. John in his vision beheld the sealing of the servants of God in their forehead ; and after the sealing of the tribes of the Children of Israel, he beheld, and behold, a great number which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands ; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God Which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures ; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen : Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, and honour and power and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Ad gloriam Dei in ejus voluntate.

APPENDIX

THE INVOCATION OF SAINTS

(Reprinted by permission from "*Comment and Criticism*," for
August, 1914.)

MOST Englishmen decline to think about the practice of invoking the saints; they follow the example of Mr. Podsnap. And many priests still associate the title of this paper with the Bishops' examination for deacons upon the XXXIX. Articles.

It is not the purpose of the writer to enter upon historical or theological controversy. He is conscious that devotional addresses to the saints in the form both of comprecation and of invocation are increasing in England, and he wishes to consider the matter patiently and sympathetically. He finds himself divided in his sympathy between those who are alarmed and those who are inclined to resent the alarm; and his main purpose is to point out certain developments in our religious experience which make the invocation of saints at the present time the natural outcome of our life. He does not claim to have sufficiently intimate acquaintance with the inner life of the Church of England to be able to trace this development in detail; but he believes that he is roughly correct in referring to Dr. Darwell Stone's article in *The Church Quarterly Review* for

January, 1899, as publicly marking the change. In that article, when reprinted, it was stated that "among the questions to which recent controversy in the Church of England has directed attention is that of the invocation of saints."

The publication of the English Hymnal in 1906 deliberately accepted the fact that the change was not confined to a few, but had to be recognized in a hymn-book which was to meet the needs of English Churchmen. More recently the open letter of the Bishop of Zanzibar has commented in strong terms upon the difference in the treatment meted out to a writer who had made a brilliant attempt to interpret the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ in eschatological terms—an attempt for which many students are very grateful to him, whether they agree with his conclusions or not—and to a priest who had held an unauthorized service in which he had invoked the Blessed Mother and two other saints.

And almost as it were to-day we are indebted to Fr. Puller, and not for the first time, for having brought to our notice a book which will have to be read by all who desire to combine wisdom and knowledge with devotional fervour. Fr. Delehaye's "Les origines du Culte des martyrs" is being made the subject-matter of a series of articles in *The English Church Review* which began in the July number.

It is impossible to approach the present situation without first turning one's mind back to the generation which produced Article XXII., and deliberately excluded all invocations from our public worship. One

reflection which must surely be made is the terrible punishment which in the divine providence follows the sin of exaggeration. In this case the reaction has dominated our devotional life for more than three centuries. We have been debarred not merely from any direct address to the saints, but, by the almost entire neglect of them, a severe check has been put upon our realization of the spiritual fulness of Christian fellowship. In particular, we had almost lost, until recently, all tender devotion to the Blessed Mother. To Dean Alford it was a matter of deep grief that the Italians only used the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary, and did not address themselves to their Saviour. When Keble wrote his beautiful poems upon Our Lady he was strongly advised that some of them were not suited to publication.

Where, however, an excessive reaction follows a great exaggeration it seems that rightly the far greater share of the blame ought to be laid upon the exaggeration than on the undue reaction. But there comes a time when one asks whether the reaction is not itself now an exaggeration, and partly responsible—if not as cause, yet as accompanying circumstance—for some of the defects of the present time. And if we have no right to deny the lessons of the sixteenth century, so neither can we deny the lessons of the centuries which have followed. There is continuity in history.

It may be said with reason that while a moderate and restrained use of invocation is not in itself to be regarded as wrong, yet history has shown that abuses have arisen in the past, and that therefore it would be

foolish to allow any liberty. To this there is perhaps only one sufficient reply—the impossibility of its application. There is no teaching or practice of the Church which has not been fearfully abused, whether the doctrine of justification by faith, or the principle of grace, or the sacraments, or the authority of the Church, or the right of private judgment. But as Christians we have to believe in the Holy Spirit of God and to follow truth, boldly relying upon His living power. If to invoke the saints is not sinful, and is the prompting of many hearts, and those not always the least experienced in the life of prayer, then indeed we cannot fear to face the consequences of the possible perversion of what is good.

It has been urged in some quarters that the leaders of the Catholic movement in England did not give to the invocation of saints a place in their programme, if indeed they even gave it any support whatever, and that the revival of the practice is due to those who have far outstripped their leaders and are turning catholicism into a Romanizing movement. The accusation raises questions which call for calm reflection.

In the first place it is to be remembered that the originators of the Catholic revival were pioneers. Theirs was the duty of calling England's attention to fundamentals at a critical moment. We seemed to be seriously in danger of letting the Church fall away as a divine society, and of treating her as an ethical organization of the state. Her constitution and her sacramental life had to be revived in the devotion and affection of her children. It was not until this had been mainly accomplished, and the sons of the Church had again realized

themselves as fellow-heirs with the saints of all ages and the children of the martyrs, that any promptings toward invoking the saints could arise in our midst. It is one of many debts which we owe to these pioneers that they moved surely and certainly from one fundamental position to another, and did not suddenly call into existence devotional practices or ceremonies for which the ground was not yet prepared.

But we are the children of this revival, who have inherited a full conviction of the catholic life; we do not stand where the pioneers stood. And although we are unworthy of them, rather selfishly indulging ourselves in the glory where they were content with the work, yet it is not possible for us—nor would they who worked for the future have desired it—to confine ourselves to their position, as though there were some subtle finality about it.

In the next place there is some suspicion that this is not a legitimate development, but is encouraged by a spirit of disloyalty and disobedience; and it does not seem possible to deny that there are some grounds for the suspicion; and the occasional indiscretion of unbalanced enthusiasm may unduly increase this uneasiness. But no reasonable person doubts that the suspicion is based on a very small amount of evidence, and that the undue stress laid here and there upon this devotional practice is not the cause but the symptom of restlessness. If one has already made up his mind that the Church of England is hopelessly Protestant, that everything desirable is to be found in the Roman Communion, while everything Anglican is to be sneered at,

then the invocation of saints will do as well as anything else to point the moral. Situated as we are, historically and liturgically, it is inevitable that we must have some who are really not of us at each end of the long chain of belief and practice which connects with Rome at one end and with Protestant Nonconformity at the other. If some few would try to force the invocation of saints to the front and drive our bishops reluctantly to some pronouncement or to individual exercise of discipline, so also some few will try to dare the bishops to express disapproval of the exchange of ministerial duty between the Church and Chapel. And both extremes act upon the same policy ; they believe that the bishops dare not express a decided opinion, and that as a result their action must be admitted to be lawful. Such intentions cannot be called other than fundamentally disloyal.

But if any movement is damaged by its extreme exponents, no wise man will allow himself on that account to be led away from the careful study of the problem in its broader issues. Very few persons will regard Mr. Temple as seriously tinged with Romanism or Russianism. Yet he has written, "Thus the one great 'Service' of the Christian Church emphasizes the true nature of the Church. We have lost sight of a great part of this truth in England. Abuses and errors had become associated with parts of the full doctrine, and in the abolition of the abuses the truth itself suffered. Prayers for the dead dropped out of use ; but they represent a spontaneous and generous impulse of the human heart, and the right to offer them is implicit in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. The Invocation

of Saints passed out of use, because men not only asked the Saints to present their prayers, but prayed to the Saints themselves instead of God; but if 'with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of Heaven we laud and magnify God's glorious Name,' why should we not ask that company to assist our prayers as much as our praises? For the Church is one, and the gates of death do not prevail against it. The Church as it exists for the Omniscient Love of God is the all-embracing communion of His children, the worthy object of His Love, the Bride of Christ."¹ One would venture the suggestion that he has in these words rather expressed what he knows others to be feeling as part of their interpretation of the Church than that he has described his own devotional experience. And the words are quoted under the impression that they express what a tolerant mind believes to be an unassailable position held by a large number of loyal Churchmen, who have no more inclination towards the Roman Communion than presumably has Mr. Temple.

Quite apart, however, from any fear of deliberate disloyalty there is also much else to be considered on this side of the question. We are all rather inclined to believe that what is freshly realized by us will be the panacea of all evils, and are also liable to forget that what we have come to tolerate or to believe may nevertheless find in the minds of others an almost invincible prejudice, which can give a very good justification for itself. Indiscreet enthusiasm is unfortunately often responsible for a great deal of harm.

¹ "Foundations," p. 346.

It ought, then, to be borne in mind that the invocation of saints is not a necessary duty of Catholics, but is rather the privilege of advanced devotional experience, or the expression of simple piety among those who have been taught it from childhood. The justification of the practice by any individual ought to be that it helps him to pray to God more fervently by assisting him to realize the invisible and spiritual. It needs very careful consideration whether some, who are not advanced sufficiently in the life of prayer to grasp its difficulties, may not find in the invocation of saints an easy substitute for persevering progress. It may seem to be easier to pray to the saints than to pray to God; but the Christian's true aim is to become athirst for God Himself.

And indiscretion may unconsciously lead some to advocate the practice of invoking the saints, recommending it as a Catholic practice, perhaps even in a few cases pressing it as almost a Catholic duty, when what is really needed is that the beginner in the devout life should learn to pray to God. And such indiscretion, arising from no spirit of disloyalty, may nevertheless have disastrous results. With some the deeper experience of prayer's difficulty may never be faced; prayer may become a dull habit of duty, and address to the saints may be an easy sedative to the conscience. In other cases there is real ground for fear that in ignorant and unbalanced minds there may arise a sense of dissatisfaction inclining them to argue that that communion cannot be right in which this practice is viewed with disfavour, and that another communion which gives it full liberty of expression must

be the right Church. This reflection is, however, double-edged.

With the greatest plainness it ought to be said that ecclesiastical disobedience, in spirit as well as in letter, is neither Catholic nor does it advance the work of God. Our fathers, the bishops, have a responsibility which taxes them to the uttermost. Their position, too, enables them to see many sides of a question which are not so manifest to us who are happily in humbler spheres. They are peculiarly responsible for public worship in church, whether it be the conduct of the offices provided in the Prayer-book, or the use of parish churches for more informal service. Those who feel most strongly that the time is come for speaking more plainly about the invocation of saints should be the most careful to avoid the suspicion of intending to be a law to themselves, or of forcing the hands of a bishop through injudicious or aggressive action or speech, and compelling him, probably with the greatest reluctance, to take some action when his whole desire is to watch in silence, and to observe the signs of the time.

The writer desires, further, to plead very affectionately on behalf of those who cannot regard this matter with the same sympathetic appreciation as himself. He knows that as a Catholic he need not invoke the saints, and that as a Christian he ought to think of others before exercising his liberty to the full. And he knows that it is not merely prejudice which makes some Christians so determined in their opposition. They have a deeply religious jealousy of the prerogatives of God, and at present no argument will move them.

They know the arguments and they reject them. They would say they have studied history and read its lessons. Only one thing will convince them. If, in course of time, they get to know that the Christians who invoke the saints are those who love and serve their Lord God with peculiar devotion, are those who are masters in the school of prayer, and disciples pre-eminently of Him Who has given us the gospel of love, then they will be drawn to them by the cords of Christian brotherhood. But that requires time, and it may be seriously impeded by hasty and injudicious enthusiasm. And at the present moment there is nothing which can help more to win a patient attention to the claims of liberty to address the saints in one's private prayers, and to commend the practice to others, than a clear recognition that the right to speak to the saints must be won by a special devotion to the King of Saints.

The signs of the times point unhesitatingly to the conclusion that it is no longer possible to view the invocation of saints with indifference or with deliberate and unsympathetic disapproval. The devotional practice can be guided ; it cannot be condemned.

In the first place, then, it is not possible to-day to expect Catholics to pay no attention to the devotional practices of the Catholic Church in the East and in the Roman Communion. Whatever exaggeration may be found among the ignorant, or in popular and unauthorized devotions, it is undeniable that the spirit of life in these Catholic communions finds a natural expression in the use of invocations, and that such expression is not evidence of any deficiency in the true spirit of worship and of

prayer, or of any lack of devotion to our Blessed Lord. Many Englishmen, who find no place in their own prayers for such devotions, do nevertheless feel that even if their personal inclination is out of sympathy with invocation, even if secretly they have a fear of it, they cannot speak evil of a practice so widely recognized, and authoritatively, by the Catholic Church, and others have learned from these great communions that in this way they may enrich their own devotional life.

Secondly, nothing is more remarkable to-day in our English Church life than the desire for a better understanding between all who name the Name of Christ. The place of Catholics in the Student Christian movement, and their influence in many of the conventions which meet at Swanwick, is evidence of the depth of this feeling among them, even to the extent of their being ready to incur the suspicion or coldness of some of their friends, who, regarding unity rather from the side of dogmatics, are inclined to look to Rome and the East as the only possible interest for those who are like-minded with them. But there cannot be any room for doubt that the present temper of mind, desiring to approach nearer to others in a spirit of love and mutual understanding, does at the same time increase the desire of Churchmen towards those whom they regard as pre-eminently their brethren, with whom they are debarred from communion by reasons less vital than those which separate them from the Christians of the English denominations. Many Churchmen are readily turning to the English Nonconformists in love, and mutual confession of failure, and in hopeful and frank honesty

are facing the great differences between them, rather than weakly shutting their eyes to them. But it is unity that they are seeking, and not a federation of differences ; and it would be a terrible blow to the present disposition towards mutual exchange of convictions, and the desire for unity, if at this time a further barrier were to be erected between them and the great communions which represent the chief object of their prayers, and the larger part of Christendom.

In the third place, one great fruit of the revival of Church life has been a fuller realization of the spiritual. We do happily appreciate to-day that we belong to a society which is one in all ages and countries, and which is also one in heaven, among the blessed dead and in the sacramental fellowship on earth. The writer is quite content to follow Dr. Swete's historical exposition of the " Communion of Saints " in the Apostles' Creed, and has no desire to force it into an assertion which almost implies the invocation of saints. But while life is more than ever being realized to be for the large majority of our fellow-men a painful and unequal drudgery, many great-hearted Christians are learning day after day to value the enheartenment which comes from knowing themselves in the sordidness of toil, and the material struggle of existence, to be in fellowship with the victorious company of the faithful. In the isolation in which a Christian boy stands at school, or a man or woman at work, it is increasingly a support to him to realize the invisible society in its fulness, and to hold communication with it. It is this spiritual character of the Church which sustains him, which explains the

sacraments to him, which enables him to look upward and forward, because he realizes himself to be already in the kingdom that is to come, one of a noble company of fellow-men, who help him by their prayers, and to whom he turns as a younger brother to his elders.

And history seems to support the proposition that where the saints are never addressed, there they are forgotten. At one time even the observance of Saints' days, and their vigils, as ordered by our Prayer-book, had largely become neglected. The renewed vigour of spiritual realization has changed the whole outlook, and as a natural result men are feeling their way now to some active appreciation of their fellowship with the largest and most powerful society in existence, which alone can enable them to stand against the world-societies which oppose them. And in special degree a large number of Christians are realizing great support in their fellowship with the Blessed Mother, and are turning their thoughts to her as a defence against Christological tendencies which seem to them to derogate from the supremacy of the Person of Jesus Christ, and as the ideal of purity, as virgin and mother, in an age which is undermining the sanctity of home by tampering with the Christian rules of matrimony.

And such as these, who are thus enjoying the freedom of their privileges in the family of God, are not much troubled by the difference between comprecation and invocation, or the theological question whether the saints in their heavenly life hear us directly, or whether they

—all truth and knowledge see
In the Beatific Vision of the Blessed Trinity.

Such refinements are apt to strike them merely as the evidence of inappreciation. But if those who do not feel the full force of these considerations in relation to the subject-matter of this paper were to speak to us more frequently of the Holy Mother and of the saints, and were to enable us to feel that they no less than ourselves love them, value them, and find the blessedness of often thinking of them, if they spoke more often to us of the prayers of the saints for us, and the blessedness of their present life, perhaps there would be less tendency to press the invocation of saints as almost necessary for the realization of the fulness of spiritual life.

Finally, another consideration seems to be of great value at this time. Nothing is perhaps more depressing than the seemingly low ideal which we have of Christian life. Having forgotten the heroism of the saints, their noble witness in martyrdom, self-sacrifice and abandonment, we have tended to think of Sunday school teachers as the highest ideal of Christian life, and to sing "For all the saints" at their grave-side. Yet any one who is alive to the urgent problems of the present time must know that if the Church is to respond to her call she has to realize again a standard of poverty, of self-abandonment, of recklessness, and venture, such as we cannot as yet face. And it is noteworthy that the one bishop of our communion who has written in plain words upon the invocation of saints in these days, is the chief pastor of the diocese which has called forth an unusual amount of heroic service and of a readiness to lay down one's life for the cause of Christ.

The revival of religious communities has been one

of the fruits of that fuller realization of our Catholic heritage in which instinctively is felt our close and intimate fellowship with the saints. Yet even here scarcely a beginning has been made. The Mission field calls out for teaching brotherhoods, and we are forced to admit that we cannot respond to the need because such is the ambition of life, that the teachers will all desire to be ordained. And this is indeed merely an illustration.

We have forgotten the standard set by the saints, because we have forgotten the saints. And having forgotten the standard set us by those who followed in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, we have almost forgotten to imitate the life of Jesus Christ Himself in its utter unworldliness. The non-Christian world in England says quite plainly to-day that the religion of England may represent dogmatic Christianity, and may represent historic Christianity, but that the one thing which it does not represent is Jesus Christ. We have largely put on one side by our traditions the teaching of Jesus Christ, the readiness to practise violence upon ourselves, and to deny self, and we have modified the command to take up the cross into a warning that we must expect to have little trials in life as well as other people. We have lost sight of the facts that our Divine Master voluntarily left His home, that He endured a life of poverty when He might have earned His living as a carpenter, that He faced opposition and persecution, and that He steadily moved towards crucifixion. In the determination to regard His death as "for us," and as different not in degree but in kind from the death of the martyrs,

we have incurred the just rebuke of losing sight of the deeper and mystical experiences of the fellowship of His death. Not even the example of St. Paul moves us, or the exile of St. John ; for we have relegated them to an unreal region of the "New Testament," whereas their example might indeed have stimulated us if we had been accustomed to ask them for their prayers. We have lost sense of the reality of the instant demands of Christ's example upon us, not because His example has not been put before us, even drummed into our ears, but because the purely human example of response by purely human fellow-creatures has not been kept before us in the great concrete examples which even more than the mere influence of model lives around us have a right to incite our veneration and to arouse our aspiration. We have lost the continuity of heroic lives, and Christianity is become a commonplace.

THE END

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